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MAURICE ELVINGTON.

VOLUME II.

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MAURICE ELVINGTON;

OR,

ONE OUT OF SUITS WITH FORTUNE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

EDITED BY WILFRID EAST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MAURICE ELVINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

I STARTED early the next morning for Budesdale House, of course in a very radical temper, by no means rendered more gentle by a slight touch of involuntary awe and respect for the station of the very great nobleman with whom I was about to have an interview. On reaching the mansion, I discovered that I knew the exterior of it exceedingly well, although I had never taken the trouble to inquire who lived there. Budesdale House was one of those substantial Palladian palaces which were erected during the reigns of the first Georges by Whig grandfathers of great political renown in

their day, and the very flags and steps of which always seem to me to echo with the feet of Bubb Doddingtons, Cragges, Sir Stephen Foxes, and Wilmingtons, creeping up the stairs to beg—to coax—perhaps to bribe. Their grandsons turned out Tories of the first water of course, for Farmer George and Mr Pitt locked all other politics out of the treasury. Budesdale House then was what is styled “one of the ornaments of the metropolis,” although the metropolis, taken in its collective sense of men and women, saw very little of it, for there was a great fortification erected between the lofty Budesdale line and the vile outer world, in the shape of a stone screen with Ionic pilasters and massive doors with bronze knockers locking out the inner court; and all these approaches were guarded by tall porters with powdered heads, through whom I had to fight my way into this Piccadilly Malakhoff; but I did so more easily than I expected.

When fairly inside the mansion, I was handed over to several very patronizing gentlemen in suc-

cession, and followed them with implicit faith, up no end of staircases, and along three or four corridors, until I found myself in what I supposed was the library. Here I had to wait a respectful time, and improve my mind by studying a dim parchment pedigree over the chimney-piece, while the Earl was informed that a humble visitor had kept his appointment. When the great nobleman at last condescended to enter the library, I certainly was struck with his appearance, for he was a handsome man, and possessed bland stately manners. Lord Budesdale was of tall stature, and although he was in the decline of life, his features, over which a benevolent expression played, were still finely chiselled. There was a firmness in his compressed lip, certainly, which answered to the idea I had formed of him as a very obstinate man, and perhaps, although of good average ability, a person not gifted with any far-sightedness or sagacity. Still the countenance was a good one, and had that ancestral family portrait look about it, which always appears to me to hover round the

faces of these descendants of twenty or thirty noblemen, and I put some value upon this in an antiquarian point of view. Well, I observed mentally to myself, the very moment you first look at a person, you either like him or you do not, and I like this terrible Lord Budesdale after all.

As for the Earl's manners, although they were fearfully stately, the greatest Jacobin in the world could not have taken reasonable exception to them. Lord Budesdale, who prided himself on never making any concession to innovation, even in the merest trifle, and who dressed for the most part in the costume worn at the commencement of the century, retained the dignified deportment of the last generation of noblemen. After looking at his face, and listening to his voice for a few minutes, I half imagined myself to be closeted with Lord North, the Marquis of Rockingham, the Premier Duke of Portland, or some other historical notability. He received me with great courteousness; requested me to be seated, and at once put me at my ease by talking of the subject of our interview

as if we had already come to an agreement, and had nothing to do but settle the details: probably, as far as his own consent was asked, he had. Now, although the moment I beheld the gray hair and quiet blue eye of Lord Budesdale, I had given up all idea of picking a quarrel with him—indeed felt ashamed of ever allowing it to enter my head—I did not understand having my thousand and one scruples set aside in this summary fashion, so went into them forthwith, and at great length, secretly enjoying the vexation I saw depicted on the countenance of my victim. The moment, however, I saw that I was really annoying him, I felt in a more compliant humour. It is something to annoy a person when you do not exactly presume to set him at open defiance—at least one's self-love thinks it is something.

After all, Lord Budesdale was the wiser man of the two, for he threw himself back in his chair, as much as to give me notice that he did not intend to condescend to wrangle with me. When I came to a full stop, he asked me very quietly if I had

any further suggestions to offer, and then informed me that he had made every necessary arrangement for his son's studies at Cambridge, so that I had only to prepare him for his matriculation. This was of course a civil way of letting me into the secret that Lord Budesdale considered Mr Markham's career at Cambridge no affair of mine; but the Earl smoothed down the rebuff by speaking in very handsome terms of the good account poor Melland—who by the way was known to be a desperate Tory—had given him of my abilities and acquirements, observing, that as his son was to become the member of a body which had always prided itself upon its proficiency in classical studies—of course he meant T—— College—he was very glad to secure him the assistance and tuition of a good scholar.

I positively clutched at this allusion to the University studies, although the classics are by no means the weak point of the Cambridge system, as something which afforded me a fresh opportunity of differing from Lord Budesdale, and went into

what I considered the deficiencies of mere verse-writing and verbal criticism as the means of educating the intellect and refining the taste of a young gentleman. The Earl of course appeared surprised when he found me so pertinaciously bent upon taking down the character of the Alma Mater I had pledged myself in the Senate House, I believe, to cry up on every possible opportunity, but dismissed my objections, nevertheless, with a wave of his hand.

“I was educated at Oxford myself, Mr Elvington,” said Lord Budesdale, in a round and oratorical style of language, which long use and self-restraint had rendered his natural manner, “and shall never forget the debt of gratitude I owe to that sound and noble school of learning. Oxford is no longer, I admit, in the hands of men who, by their daily, hourly efforts, can keep the contagion of an irreligious and levelling spirit—the spirit of the age you call it, I suppose—out of its halls and cloisters, but yet is the only place in the kingdom where our young men can acquire sound principles in

church and state. Mr Markham, however, who is my second son, will have to adopt a career in life ; either the diplomatic service of his country, or the profession of politics. Now, with very fair abilities in other respects, he has one defect in his character : he has no reliance on his own powers and energies. I sometimes meet at the table of a distinguished peer of the Whig party, with whom I am nevertheless on terms of private friendship, a great ornament of the University of Cambridge—the sound and orthodox Doctor Sailwell. He has informed me that the whole energy of his University is brought to bear against these very defects in a youth's character, timidity and unreadiness ; and acting under his advice, I have entered Mr Markham of the University.

Now I thought this really too bad. Melland had not only been routing up a young nobleman for me, but had entrapped me into the task of introducing to Cambridge a protégé of Doctor Sailwell's—a man who licked the shoes of every nobleman in the kingdom, and had, when a resi-

dent fellow of T——, “gated” Maurice Elvington himself for not taking off his cap to Chief Justice Gaily, when the fine old gentleman came to the Lodge, on the Circuit. I took up the tale again then, and made sundry strong remarks on “coaching” and “cramming,” with which I shall not trouble the reader, and wound up with a request, made so earnestly, that it brought tears into my eyes, that Lord Budesdale would refer to a certain number of the Edinburgh Review, where he would find an article written, I had been informed, by Sir William Hamilton, which exposed with perfect success the worthlessness of mathematical studies as a means of general training and criterion of ability—of course, in all other respects, the Professor spoke respectfully of the pursuits of Newton and Laplace, and I wished to do the same.

Lord Budesdale opened his eyes a little at my presumption in daring to refer him on the spot to that terrible old bugbear of his, the Octavo in buff and blue. However, he was an obstinate

man at all times, and on this occasion had become so quietly irritated at my opposition to his wishes, that he was now quite determined that Maurice Elvington and no one else should prepare his son for Cambridge. He informed me, then, with a bland smile, that Mr Melland had told him that I had lived during my residence at Cambridge on bad terms with some of the authorities—of course, many self-willed young men would do so, and he remembered himself that during his own residence at Oxford, even Lord Sidmouth, when an undergraduate, had positively presumed to differ in opinion from a distinguished college-tutor, Doctor Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell, in a public stage-coach. There were deficiencies in the Cambridge system, he knew, and this did not surprise him, for the place had long since fallen entirely into the hands of the Whig party, who had even corrupted the opinions of such a reasonable moderate man as Dr Sailwell. However my objections, which perhaps were a little tinged by some affronts I had received when at T——, came too late to alter the

destination of Mr Markham, who was already a member of that college.

Such were the not very conclusive arguments with which the Earl defended his decision to expose his son to the horrors of "the cube root" and miseries of "the greatest common measure." He then changed the subject, treated my acquiescence in the proposal to coach up young Markham as a matter of course, and settled our minor arrangements in the most handsome manner possible. By degrees the very coolness with which Lord Budesdale exacted assent to his own views began to exert a kind of magnetism over my will, and I really detected myself at last agreeing to every proposition the moment the Earl opened his mouth to make it. We parted in what under the circumstances might almost be called a friendly manner; and as I walked from Budesdale House, and recalled the results of the interview, I discovered that I had undertaken to prepare young Mr Markham for his matriculation at Cambridge—every tittle of our arrangements having been settled ac-

according to the preconceived ideas of his father. I believe that I am not the first person who has entered the sanctum of a very great man with a determination to have his own way with him, and who has ended by making the discovery that the great man has quietly talked him over, and ended by having his own way with his visitor.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER keeping a few appointments at Budesdale House, I began to revolve round the great central luminary as submissively as the other satellites of the system. There was not any actual pressure exerted upon my freewill to compel me to bow down and worship the Earl; but the moment one passed the screen of the court of his mansion, one appeared to leave the British constitution in the rear, and to enter the domains of an absolute monarch. Any one who has noticed the free-born Englishman and Englishwoman travelling on the Continent, must have observed how very soon they fall into the slavish and cautious political habits of the natives of the country in which they reside,

notwithstanding their continual assertions of self-dependence, and how careful they are to give no reasonable cause of complaint to the government. So I considered myself neither better nor worse than the rest of my countrymen, when I adapted myself to the social habits of the little Austria of Budesdale House, and allowed myself to be numbered among the other grown-up children who basked in the sunshine of what was after all the benevolent despotism of its lord and master.

When I was introduced to my pupil, the Hon. Algernon Markham, I learned that his case made no exception to the general rule, for he had been accustomed from his childhood to submit his own wishes to the dictation of his father in matters of the most trifling nature. He sometimes chafed upon the rein, of course, for he was a very fine young fellow, full of the eagerness and spirit of eighteen years, and had recently quitted a large public school, where he had learned to make the lower forms stand in awe of him. Upon better acquaintance I liked Mr Markham exceedingly. He

possessed those pleasant frank manners, entirely free from self-conceit, which the better class of youths bring away from our great educational establishments—indeed it is the most valuable thing they learn in them. In person young Markham was tall and handsome—he possessed the fair complexion of his family, but there was no want of manliness in his appearance. I took a fancy to the young man for his good looks the first time I set eyes upon him, for personal comeliness both in men and women has always exerted what I consider its legitimate influence over me. A fine form or intelligent countenance are nature's letter of introduction with the bearer, and I am afraid that we generally defer looking into his own pretensions until we have seen what his mistress says in his favour.

We soon settled our arrangements for reading, or rather carried out those quietly suggested by the Earl. The demands made upon my stock of knowledge by Mr Markham's College were very moderate; and it is my opinion that if they were

amplified, and then extended to the whole University, that childish, vexatious examination, "the Little Go," as it is called, might be got rid of altogether. My pupil had a Book of Virgil and a portion of the Memorabilia to get up, together with some elementary mathematics. He had been over the classical subjects before at his grammar-school, and the mathematics I determined in my own mind he should teach himself, for I had not the patience to return to these low subjects, after having bid them a respectful farewell some ten years since. I therefore read very gently through the Virgil and Xenophon, in order to renew Mr Markham's recollections of Socrates and the pious Æneas,—two worthies whose acts and deeds a head of eighteen, full of fowling-pieces and blood-horses, found it difficult to retain,—and left him to his theorems in Euclid and problems in algebra, whilst I took down Hobbes or Bacon from the library shelves. I enjoyed myself very pleasantly with the Idola, the discussion on the nature of virtue or the paradoxes of the Leviathan, and the Hon. Algernon

rowed boats from Cambridge to Ely in x , a time to be ascertained, or brought the two hands of a clock together after y revolutions. With all due respect and deference to my venerable University, which was being the best fitted for a senator and statesman?

I cannot conscientiously assert that I found Mr Markham much enamoured of work of any description; but as it was his father's will that he should buckle to and read, he submitted with that cheerful goodwill which I have often admired in these young scions of a good stock. He even followed his mathematics—a branch of study of which he previously knew nothing—with less than the usual amount of exasperation, and I soon discovered that I could carry him on in them far beyond his first year's subjects, if I thought it judicious to do so. But I found the poor youth's mind so dreadfully uncultivated in every other^{*} respect, that I considered that any time we had to spare would be much better employed in giving him a little insight into a few common things in literature and history, than in preparing him for a race his Univer-

sity would give him no time to run. Educational amateurs are always crying out for "the virgin soil," and, in these days of knowledge brought home to every man's door, find it difficult to discover it. But I had not only a fine piece of virgin soil to exert my abilities upon, but something like an intellectual wilderness.

How a Doctor of Divinity and five assistant masters with black hoods over their gowns, had so ingeniously contrived to muddle away the whole six years during which they had feloniously abstracted my poor pupil from the nursery governess,—how they had taught him so little, and untaught him so much that he must have learned on his nurse's knees,—beat my comprehension. The priggish resolution to compel three hundred young gentlemen to write miserable Greek and Latin verse, accounted for three or four years of the time, but still there was a residue apparently unemployed. Mr Markham, in the first place, knew nothing of the literature of his own country—knew less of Hamlet and Macbeth than he did of

the pious Æneas, and did not think it worth his while to ask who wrote a mere English play. Foreign languages—necessary accomplishments to a diplomatist—were beneath the attention of the very Ancient Foundation which had been established by a king who spoke French, and a queen whose native tongue was the Spanish; and T—— College, which stands in its gateway the effigies of those polyglot monarchs, the Tudors, would certainly not take any pains to supply the defect. His ignorance of the laws and institutions of the country which he was some day to try his hands at making or marring, was interesting, to say the least of it. Extremes meet, and the Ragged School pupil, who was educating UP and had attained to the idea that the Duke of Wellington was the Queen of England, met Mr Markham, who had been carefully educated DOWN, half-way—for my pupil asserted that the Iron Duke was the perpetual Prime Minister of Queen Victoria, and waxed so positive on the subject that he offered to make me a bet on the spot that he was right.

Of foreign affairs, or even humble geography, Mr Markham was disgracefully ignorant, as a matter of course—so ignorant, that when I gently reminded him that Canada, where his own brother happened to be serving, was a British colony, he opened his eyes very widely, and seemed thankful for once to gain such an accession to his knowledge. Indeed he sagely observed, that he could make *that pay* by telling it to his father, who was always reproaching him with his want of general information, and show him that he—Algernon—was not quite such a fool as people thought him. He admitted that he was deficient in general knowledge, but then people could not learn things without being taught them; and who but his sister Ven had ever taken the trouble to talk over such matters with him. Whether he did carry this great piece of information to the Earl I cannot say, but from what his son occasionally let fall, I learned that Lord Budesdale was very much gratified by these little conversations between us, and considered that my pupil gained great profit from them. Of

course the great man took all the credit to his own account, and congratulated himself on his sagacity in obtaining for Mr Markham a tutor who, instead of teaching him to draw Athens and the Piræus, or the frontispiece of Donaldson's Greek Theatre, with his eyes shut, really enabled him to assert in general conversation that Canada was an English colony.

Of Lord Budesdale I saw very little after my first interview with him. He evidently considered that he had placed Mr Markham entirely in my hands, and that a continual interference with his son's studies did not consort with the dignity of an Earl. He came into the library once or twice, certainly—but it was before his son entered it—and asked me to give him my candid opinion as to the nature of his abilities, a subject on which he evidently had not quite made up his own mind. When I told him that Mr Markham's talents were sound rather than brilliant, but were well fitted for the wear of the world, he seemed gratified, and said it was all that he desired or expected. He would then make a few gentlemanly remarks on a casual

topic or two, and retire before Algernon entered the room.

The Lady Venetia Markham was also at that time in London; and as Mr Simply's information had recalled to me the gossip of our newspaper court circular, it seemed strange to me to hear a lady, whom I had for some months looked upon as an elegant portrait, rather to be lauded in an elaborate critique as transcending our conceptions of anything human, than appreciated as a creature of vulgar flesh and blood, talked of familiarly by her own brother, and called "Ven" by him. Young Markham was evidently very fond of his only sister, and from the little anecdotes he from time to time related of her kindness to him, I thought that she merited his affection. She was much older than her brother, I learned, and was rather disposed, I suspected, to make a pet of him, not considering that Algernon had long outgrown the mere playful fondness even of a sister. Indeed, I may observe once for all that there were no family feuds in the Budesdale line, and very few scandals.

The whole family—with the exception of Algernon—was and had always been a haughty self-sufficient race, but they knew how to respect themselves. The person who happened to be the head of their house for the time being governed all the cadets of it with a firm but considerate autocracy ; and under this rather stern allegiance, the Markhams lived in peaceful and even affectionate intercourse with each other.

After Algernon had been my pupil two months, I caught sight of this celebrated lady. The Lady Venetia came one morning into the library, and after congratulating her brother in a pleasant voice on the painful fact of his being hard at work, took a little volume of Ariosto from one of the smaller shelves. I had some curiosity to see her ; and no doubt had I been, as probably she imagined, the mere tutor of her brother, should have appeared dreadfully nervous and uneasy during her stay in the room. But the nephew of Sir William Maurice thought the fate hard enough which compelled him to grind the brother of a great lady up

for the University, and could not voluntarily make his lot more severe still by allowing the great lady herself to put him out of countenance; so he went on very quietly with his pupil. Lady Venetia then just turned round with the volume in her hand, paused a few moments, gave one of those looks one never can forget—they are so cold, supercilious, and self-possessed—and then, with a graceful inclination of her head, quitted the room.

I had seen Lady Venetia's portrait in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy that very summer, and came to the conclusion that the artist for once had scarcely flattered his original. She was a perfectly beautiful woman, just subsiding into the quiet elegance which steals over such forms and features about their thirtieth year. She was as light as young Markham, but had the fine eyes and beautifully chiselled features which rendered the countenance of the old Earl so dignified and commanding. Such was the tall and graceful daughter of the House of Budesdale, of whom for many days I saw no more and thought no more,

fully occupied as I then was in inducting her brother into the interesting subject of the Reduction of Surds, in order to qualify him to take the lead of Lord John or Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons.

CHAPTER III.

As the correspondence of the *British Lion* no longer made any demands on the evenings, I generally spent them away from my dull and rather uncomfortable apartments. I am sorry to confess that I sometimes accompanied Mr Foggerton on his professional excursions, excusing myself with the reflection that I brought him home to his wife at an earlier hour than perhaps he would otherwise have been released. When the winter came on, I frequently spent a day or two at a time with my good friends the Gentlys, and became the occupant of poor Tom's bedroom over the library, which Mrs Gently took great pride in setting out with all

kinds of luxuries and comforts, scent bottles, perfumed soaps, toilet pincushions stuck full of ingenious patterns with pins, for my especial benefit and recreation. Mr Gently also would often tempt me round to his office in Bedford Row, that I might have ocular proof of how very easily he took the cares of his profession, but the poor man always appeared to me to be immersed in such a turmoil of harassing engagements and trumpery contests with other legal fencers, that I formed a very low opinion of the delightful occupation of getting people into trouble or fishing them out of it.

In the course of time I became acquainted with several friends of this family, and managed to get on very well with them—indeed I believe that I was rather a favourite. A frequent visitor at their house was the legal young gentleman, Mr Sadgrove, who had been held up in terrorem over me by Miss Mary Ann. I cannot say that one had much reason to be afraid of Mr Sadgrove, although I disliked him exceedingly owing to his precise and pragmatistical manners. There was a nasty

kind of caution about him even in little matters, and one naturally mistrusts a man who seems to mistrust everybody else. For all this, Mr Sadgrove was a great friend of the Gentlys, who had known him for some time. Mr Gently admired his steady old gentlemanly habits, and the tenacity with which he held on to prospects by no means brilliant; while Mrs Gently was the natural protector of any young bachelor thrown entirely on his own resources. Miss Gently, as the reader knows, made him her model young man; and as for Fanny, why, as he was very polite to her, she was equally friendly with him. Mr Sadgrove was rather too stiff for Amelia, who would mimic his finical ways behind his back, but when he did condescend to romp with her, she would take him into high favour, although, with the natural but unpleasant openness of young people of her time of life, she would tell him that she preferred me one thousand times over.

I cannot assert that when we encountered each other at Mr Gently's it appeared to add much to

Mr Sadgrove's satisfaction, but, like a sensible person as he was, he made the best of things, and was remarkably civil to me. Indeed we became such good friends, that we frequently walked home together, and on these occasions Mr Sadgrove would get very confidential, that is concerning his own affairs, for he loved talking about himself above all things on the face of this earth. I soon discovered from his conversation that he was as narrow-minded as he was pragmatical, and, like all such stiff people, dreadfully pugnacious, and ready to fight any other legal pugilist for mere love: yet the man was conscientious in his way, and would not, I think, have advised a client wrongly, if it would have put ten thousand pounds into his pocket. He deserved credit for this, for he was eaten up with the desire of advancing himself in his profession, in which he would often bewail his own want of success, and literally hungered and thirsted after Mr Gently's eminence in the legal world. He had evidently made this gentleman his model, and would have submitted to any sacrifices to form a business con-

nexion with him. His mind dwelt on this one single aspiration night and day, and he was suspicious and jealous of any one who was in my worthy friend's good graces, and could talk very spitefully of them behind their backs. He often pumped me, as it is called, and endeavoured to make me express an unfavourable opinion of Mrs Gently and her daughters, coming again and again to the topic, and turning and twisting it round until I gave him some cool answer, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing my straight-forward friend turn down the street in Holborn which took him to Bedford Row.

Mr Gently's two articulated clerks were also occasionally to be met with at Highgate-rise. Of Mr Tallboys I need only remark, that his pursuits did not render him desirous of joining such a staid family circle when he could possibly avoid it. He just then made himself up in dress, conversation, and intellect, after a sporting young nobleman whose four-in-hand he was sometimes as a great favour allowed to drive, and would quote Bell's

Life when Mr Gently thought it advisable to talk about Blackstone. When, however, he did dine with us, he took care to tone down his sporting character considerably; and Mrs Gently and her second daughter, who were by nature tolerant, and Mr Sadgrove, who did not dread him as a professional rival, were fond of his society. For my part, I found him at the bottom a shrewd young fellow, and thought that when he had done sowing his wild oats, he would make a good country solicitor among the gentlemen farmers. Miss Gently, who looked upon him as a kind of legal renegade, positively detested Mr Tallboys, and had she been on the Bench, would, I am afraid, have struck him off the Rolls the very first week after he had painfully struggled on to them.

Young Simmers, the junior articled clerk—Mr Simmers, as he was styled with due professional decorum by Mr Gently—Simmers, according to Mrs Gently's plain style of accosting him—Master Simmers, as he was called by Amelia, and "that young Simmonds at the office," as the maid-ser-

vants, with that due regard to accuracy which distinguishes their class, generally named him—was a great favourite with us all. He was a fine youth, who, although dreadfully lazy at the office, possessed good abilities when he chose to apply them, and Mr Gently thought highly of him. He was just then an amusing compound of the manly character he thought it necessary to assume owing to his professional walk in life, and of the mere schoolboy he had been only twelve months previously. In his habits he was steady, and indeed literary; for he read a great deal of good poetry, and wrote some bad verses, and was in all other respects full of talent and activity. Mrs Gently, who had some slight acquaintance with his mother, considered it incumbent upon herself to see that his comforts were not neglected in the house where he boarded, and to put him into every little pleasure-party she could, in order to encourage him in his steady pursuits. Then her own son Tom was about the same age at the time of his death, and Simmers frequently reminded her of him. With Amelia the

young gentleman relaxed a great deal from his assumed manliness of deportment ; nay, there was a sort of flirtation between them, and Mr Simmers, who read Byron, thought it incumbent upon himself to become very misanthropical whenever the image of the young lady flitted across his mental eyesight. One evening as we were walking home together from Highgate, he kept silence for two-thirds of the journey, and then abruptly asked me,

“ Whether I did not think it better for a fellow to settle down early in life than to be going about to cricket-matches at the Eyre Arms, and rowing with other fellows at Putney? and what was my opinion? ”

As I did not feel bound to recognise this remark as referring to any “ fellow ” in particular, I replied in general terms, that a cricket-match or a boating were not bad things at times, and that it was not necessary for a “ fellow ” to be unsteady, even if he did indulge in such recreations occasionally.

“ True,” said Mr Simmers, cynically, “ but

these things pall upon one after a time—and then a fellow sits by himself and feels lonely—although,” added he, with a recollection of Byron, “one need not hate mankind when one flies to solitude. I assure you, Mr Elvington,” added he, with due emphasis, “I do not hate my fellow-creatures—I don’t indeed.”

I answered that I was very glad to hear it, and that if he had done so, my opinion of him would not have continued the same. Indeed, he generally appeared to be pretty jolly in society, and when his spirits ran away with him, became rather too noisy. However, discovering that the conversation was not leading to the topic of which his mind was full, Mr Simmers abruptly turned the subject, and asked me, “What I thought of a fellow’s marrying when he grew tired of living as a bachelor?”

“A very good thing, indeed,” I replied, “provided a person be old enough to know his own mind. If this be not the case, he would not be the first man who has lived to repent making a rash choice.”

“As to choice,” said Mr Simmers, glad to reach the point at last, “the man who marries Amelia will live to bless the day she consented to become his wife. I do not think there is any rival in the way, but if there is, I shall detest and abhor him. Amelia is very beautiful, and is growing quite a woman, and she is shamefully kept down by her elder sisters. It affects her spirits.”

I observed that I certainly had not remarked that sad fact myself, for Amelia’s spirits when in Mr Simmers’s company always appeared to me to be remarkably buoyant.

“Ah!” said my companion, much gratified, “you are a close observer, Mr Elvington, I can see. However (thoughtfully) sixteen is certainly too young an age for one to marry.”

“I should think so,” I answered. “Add on ten years, and the age will do very well.”

“I don’t know that,” retorted Simmers, sharply: “I know a chap in the law—I meet him at the judge’s chambers—who ran away with his wife when he was seventeen. He is not twenty yet,

and he has a fine little boy two years old, and he whacks him and makes him cry out like anything."

I laughed a little too much to please my young friend at this proof of early development in a vigorous father, and asked him how his friend supported the little fellow, since no child, however fine, could thrive upon castigation only.

"Well," answered he, "the chap has twenty-five shillings a-week regular. Of course Amelia couldn't live upon that, but when a fellow's father is dead and has left him property, the case is a different one. It is a nice thing," said Mr Simmers, "to take a cottage at the Isle of Wight and keep a yacht, and have a lot of little beggars running about in white pinafores, and to pitch into them for tumbling down and not keeping their faces clean."

Mr Simmers's idea of matrimony evidently took a pugilistic turn I thought, so I told him jeeringly not to pitch into the mother as well as the children; but the very suggestion made him angry.

“ My passions,” said he, “ I know are violent, but I can control them for the sake of a beloved object. The other day I got larking with one of our paid clerks, and smashed a new hat which cost twelve and sixpence on his head. But I can control myself, Mr Elvington, where I entertain respect and esteem ; and I am only afraid that if I married a woman with whom I was deeply in love, she would have too much influence over me.”

“ Well, then,” I replied, “ Mr Simmers, take care that you choose well and wisely, and do not imitate your friend who married at seventeen. By the time you are out of your articles, Amelia will have grown up a beautiful young woman, and if she keeps to her present mind, will not, I am sure, have any objection to listen to any agreeable tale you may think fit to pour into her ear.”

“ My articles !” cried Mr Simmers, turning dreadfully savage at being reminded that he was in a state of bondage, “ I shall never serve out. I respect old Gently, but his vile profession I loathe and detest. I will throughout life do what

I please, Mr Elvington, and no one, not even my own mother, shall turn me from my purpose when I have made up my mind to it. If I am disappointed in the quarter where my affections are fixed, I will break my articles immediately, and go on board a man-of-war as a naval cadet. A shot may take me as well as an older officer."

I suggested that there was no need to take this rash step immediately, and that patience was a great virtue, especially in very young men.

"The fact is," cried he, growing very irate, and fixing the blame on the wrong party, for he did not think it convenient to quarrel with me, "I know who plots against me, and who makes everybody at Highgate low-spirited and miserable. If I love Amelia, and Amelia loves me, no methodical old guy like Mary Ann Gently shall stand in our way, because she is jealous and wants to get married herself and can't. Good-night, Mr Elvington, I am very much obliged to you for listening to me, and for the good advice which you have given to me. And I wish you, sir, a very good evening."

So saying, he turned down a street leading to Bloomsbury Square, while I pursued the even tenor of my way to Bartlett's Buildings, much amused with this display of the passion of love burning in the breast of the youthful and ardent Mr Alfred Simmers.

CHAPTER IV.

TIME runs on with unprosperous men as well as their successful competitors in life, and nearly a year had now elapsed since I first sought a home under the roof of Mr Foggerton. I had been full of anxieties and perplexities the whole time, but my landlord had enjoyed a fine twelvemonths of it, keeping up his spirits—practising out of doors—and shutting his eyes as to anything unpleasant that might befall him inside them. This mode of life would have been very philosophical had Mr Foggerton been an old-world Cynic, and lived in a tub, for which Diogenes, I imagine, paid no rent and taxes; but as the landlord of the house in Bartlett's Buildings did not happen to be well read in

ancient philosophy, he one fine morning put in an execution for nine months' arrears of rent. Mr Foggerton instantly went so beside himself with wrath and indignation, and Mrs Foggerton sank into such a state of imbecile misery, that the slow-minded maidservant, who had seen such things happen in her last place, felt compelled to take the management of her young master and mistress into her own hands, and ran up into my sitting-room, whilst I was at breakfast, begging me to come down stairs to Mr Foggerton, "who was going on most dreadful." When she told me the mishap which had occurred, I remarked that it was only what I had expected to happen, and went down into the dining-parlour immediately.

When I entered the room, and observed the different effects produced by this blow on the silly young couple, I could scarcely suppress a smile. Mrs Foggerton, in whose education the good opinion of friends and neighbours had been taught to supply the place of self-reliance and conscious rectitude, was crushed by the humiliation of having

such a thing as an execution in her own house. She said that the disgraceful affair would get wind—the people in De Beauvoir Town would hear of it, and her mamma and sister would never hold up their heads again. For herself she cared nothing, but she had brought disgrace upon her family—and so on, for I need not repeat all the weak nonsense to which my poor landlady—with whom, as with all her class, disgrace and misfortune, an execution for rent, and a total break down of character, meant the same thing—gave utterance.

As for Mr Foggerton, he looked rather ashamed of himself when I first entered the room, but carried it off by a fine fit of indignation. He called my attention to the dreadful state of resolution into which he was working himself. He would pay out the execution that very day and that very hour, and not let the scum of the earth sleep under his roof. He hoped that I would take warning by his example, and not connect myself, as tenant of his trumpery property or otherwise, with a fellow who had not the feelings of a gentleman.

“ However, Elvington,” said Mr Foggerton, “ this man is, after all, what I presume to call an ass for his pains. I shall quit this dismal den, of course, for I have too much regard for Mrs Foggerton’s feelings to compel her to reside in a house which will be to her a perfect network of unpleasant associations. Ah! Elvington, what a wonderful thing that association of ideas is! Now what will become of this place when I cease to inhabit it? All the world cannot take to making artificial flowers, and putting together watches that never go, as the two people next door are doing. I hope, for the sake of my oppressor, that it will not stand empty, and compel him to reproach himself with letting a responsible tenant slip through his fingers. When I had worked up a good practice here, I should have considered myself deserving of an M.D. degree, and taken myself off to Edinburgh; but I should previously have requested the fellow to grant me a twenty-one years’ lease of this house for the sake of the goodwill, and then disposed of the entire concern to some wealthy young country-

man who had just passed Apothecaries' Hall. It is strange how lookers-on can see where greedy men overreach themselves, and how blind they are to their own interests!"

"Well, Mr Foggerton," I replied, rather dryly (for I was annoyed at seeing how blind he was to his *own* interest, and at his folly or impudence in talking in this style), "I do not see that your landlord is after all so foolish or inhuman in expecting to be paid this long arrear of rent. Really you have been shutting your eyes for the last twelve-months to a great deal which your best friends have observed clearly enough. You have taken upon yourself the responsibilities of housekeeping and the cares and duties of married life, and then have found it impossible to confine your excellent abilities to the routine of your profession."

I made this little remonstrance with the best intentions in the world, but it was very ill timed, for some suspicion of the same kind had been dawning upon the not very far-sighted intellect of the poor little wife; and, unfortunately for Mr

Foggerton, she thought fit, as she had public opinion to back her, to give utterance to her conviction.

"Yes, my dear Charles," said Mrs Foggerton, with a tartness in her manner very unusual to her, "Mr Elvington has been making the same remark concerning your neglect of your business that my mamma and sister have continually been impressing upon me. They say that you are wonderfully clever, but are too restless to settle down in your profession. That is what my mamma says of you."

"Mrs Hicks says that, does she?" retorted Mr Foggerton, rather fiercely.

"I am sorry to confess that my mamma does say it," replied Mrs Foggerton, pretty firmly.

"Perhaps when Mrs Hicks next alludes to the medical profession, she will go through some previous studies to qualify her to practise. Has Mrs Hicks any turn for anatomy, my dear Maria?"

"Now you are talking nonsense, Mr Foggerton," said the wife, getting flushed in the face; for she was rather afraid of her husband's tongue when it once fastened itself upon his mother-in-law.

“Has Mrs Hicks,” continued Mr Foggerton, quite brightening up with the flood of ideas which burst in upon him, “walked Saint Bartholomew’s Hospital, or undergone the agonizing scrutiny of the College of Surgeons? Has she compounded drugs behind the counter of a general practitioner, or delivered the ‘dose and pill to be taken at bed-time’ at the private door of a respectable patient? In fine, Mrs Foggerton, what is the value of any opinion Mrs Hicks condescends to express concerning the private affairs of her son-in-law, Charles Foggerton?”

“Of no great value, certainly, my dear Charles,” responded his better-half, “if she had not been connected with you owing to the scrape you have brought yourself into by marrying her daughter before you knew how to keep me. Since you will compel me to say it, I must remind you, my dear, that my mamma has more than once complained to you that you deceived her when you made me an offer, and allowed yourself to be deluded into the persuasion that you were better off than you

really are. I give utterance to no complaints, my dear Charles, because I am your wife, and have always been very much attached to you, but other people make remarks. And now," said Mrs Foggerton, wiping her eyes, "you have allowed us to be disgraced in this shameful manner, and I shall be ashamed to look people in the face; indeed I shall, Mr Elvington."

The conversation had taken an unlucky turn for Mr Foggerton; indeed, if this had not been the case, he would never have allowed his wife to have lectured him, even in this mild manner, without cutting her short by calling her "a silly young creature," or something of that kind. However, he felt that he must brazen it out, or the respect and admiration he exacted from his Maria would be forfeited for ever. With that end in view, then, he took out of his pocket a white cambric handkerchief, which he reserved for pathetic and moving passages of oratory, and throwing himself back in his chair, gave vent to his feelings of hurt pride and injured merit.

“ Ah ! ” said Mr Foggerton, “ this is the unreasonable, I will not say unfeeling, manner, in which every one—his wife, his familiar friend—reproaches a person when he is down in the world. Reproaches are plentiful, but good and judicious advice and encouragement are withheld from the victim of adverse circumstances. Elvington is a good fellow, and means well, I know ; but I really have respectfully to submit to him whether his telling me why the broker came into the house, will assist me in the slightest degree in getting him out of it ? Mrs Foggerton is too good for me—her attachment to her husband at this crisis of his fortunes is most exemplary and touching—it overpowers my feelings ; but really if my wife can give me no better counsel as to what we had better do next than merely to inform me that worthy Mrs Hicks has a favourable opinion of my abilities, but thinks that I do not sufficiently attend to business, she had better hold her peace.”

As Mrs Foggerton rather winced at this reproof, and did not venture to reply, her husband took

courage, and, waving his pocket-handkerchief, pursued his victory in the following strain :—

“ Mrs Foggerton reproaches me with marrying her, and insinuates that I have deceived her as to my circumstances, which is only asserting, in plain words, that I allowed my affection for a loveable, insinuating young creature to overcome my prudence : it did — I might have settled advantageously elsewhere. The partner of my uncle at Birmingham had an only daughter, pretty, well educated and captivating, and the old gentleman had a high opinion of the abilities of one Charles Foggerton. He asked that individual to dine with him, and hinted, that if a young professional man of talent and energy gained the affections of his child, he would overlook his want of fortune, and purchase a practice for him. I said to myself, shall I be tempted? No, I replied ; I have fixed my affections elsewhere, and the path of duty lies straight before me. That path of duty I have pursued blindly, confidingly, and trustfully, and it is likely to end by selling

me up. Maria reproaches me with having deceived her, and I am denied the reasonable consolation of the sympathy of my own gentle wife !”

This was too much for Mrs Foggerton, who burst into tears, and threw herself into the lap of her husband, declaring that she loved him better than ever, for she saw clearly that his affection for his wife had been his ruin. Mr Foggerton kissed her in turn, and energetically protested, “ that with her arms round his neck he could defy the world.” As they were too loving to talk about business any longer, I returned to my own apartment, having just advised the servant girl to make the broker comfortable, for he would sleep a night or two in the house I foresaw.

CHAPTER V.

I PITIED Mrs Foggerton sincerely, and had that kind of liking for her husband one generally feels for a pleasant good-for-nothing companion; but when I quietly ascertained the state of my own purse, and assured myself that, in addition to the sixty pounds arrears of rent, my landlord was overwhelmed with embarrassments in other respects, I saw that I should only ruin myself by attempting to see him through his difficulties. I lent Mrs Foggerton a ten pound note, ill spared by me, but, suspecting Mr Foggerton spent fifteen shillings of the loan that very afternoon

in his "out-door practice," was careful of advising him further as to his affairs. When left to their own resources, I soon discovered that the young couple were compelled to put themselves in the hands of the persons who, having brought them up, and given them a parcel of ridiculous notions and ideas, were responsible for their conduct—I mean Mrs Hicks, Mrs Foggerton's mamma, and her husband's uncle at Birmingham. A great many letters passed between Mr Foggerton and his relation, and Mrs Foggerton frequently returned home from De Beauvoir Town in tears, which she relieved by relating something that compelled her husband to observe, rather sternly, that "Mrs Hicks had a bad heart." But as in a week's time the broker's man took his departure very civilly, and Mr Foggerton told me one morning, with a face radiant with joy, "that he thought that he was going to have a jolly time of it at Edinburgh after all," I suspected that their affairs had taken a prosperous turn.

Whatever might be the next professional move-

ment contemplated by my restless landlord, I had many surmises of my own, and they were aided by one or two lady-like hints given to me by Mrs Foggerton that I might have to seek other apartments; that the speculation in Bartlett's Buildings was coming to a wind-up, and that Mr Foggerton's oppressor would have to take his house upon his hands again. I had taken a glance at a small set of chambers in Clement's Inn, but did not make any serious offer to the landlord. In fact, a conversation I had recently had with Lord Budesdale, led me to suspect that the Earl himself would find me a more agreeable home for the next six months than any which the stir and smoke of London could offer a bachelor in the autumn.

Lord Budesdale came one morning into the library, as usual, before Algernon was allowed to enter it; and informed me, in his usual courteous but decided manner, that he had made an alteration in his arrangements for Mr Markham's studies. He trusted that they would suit mine;

but at all events, since they were indispensable for his son's success at College, and rendered necessary by a change in his own plans for the autumn, he would enter into such an arrangement with me as would overcome all objection on my part. He stated, that as the season was nearly at an end, it was his intention to go on to the Continent in about ten days' time, but that he should return for a week in order to see Algernon again before he went up to Cambridge. The Lady Venetia would accompany him; but Mr Markham must stay behind in England, and pursue his studies quietly under my direction. He added that it had originally been his intention to have left Algernon in Budesdale House, and that if he had not varied his arrangements, he should have requested me to take up my own abode in the mansion, in order that so young a man might not be left entirely under his own control. However, when he turned matters over in his mind, he had come to the conclusion that Chartley, his country-seat, was a place much better adapted for the studies of a young gentleman

and his private tutor, and to Chartley, accordingly, his son would go down a few days after he (the Earl) quitted England. Lord Budesdale ended by requesting my acquiescence in this arrangement, and, as usual, spoke very handsomely in all other respects.

At the first blush of the offer, I felt rather nettled at the coolness of the great man, who in reality had made all these arrangements in my behalf before he had condescended to request my assent to them, and who now just treated my acquiescence as a matter of course. On reflection, however, I felt inclined to pocket the affront. I told myself that Lord Budesdale had been too long accustomed to move the human automata about him—his children and servants—like so many pieces at chess, to intend any especial slight to my own dignity, when he merely treated me in the same manner. I reflected also that as I was in bad health, and no very buoyant spirits, a change of air would render me no small amount of benefit. I had likewise grown fond of the fine young fellow my pupil, and rel-

ished the idea of having such a noble place, as he told me Chartley was, all to ourselves. Lastly, I had a few other reasons for desiring to absent myself for a few months from London, and Fanny Gently was at the bottom of them. Other people have been in that state of mind in which they do not exactly understand whether they are really in love or only smitten by a pretty face and pleasant manners, and have begged or stolen an opportunity to absent themselves for a while from the object of attraction, in order to ascertain whether they really intend anything serious or not. All this flashed through my mind during the few minutes I sat silent in the Earl's library, and I soon ended my reverie by assenting to his proposal with a readiness which gratified the great man in no small measure, so that he assured me that every arrangement should be made for my comfort during our sojourn at Chartley.

The time allowed me for my stay in London was occupied by a few arrangements I had to make with a tailor or two, and the other carnivora who

devour a single gentleman thrown entirely on his own resources, so that I had no time to notice how Mr Foggerton got on with his relations. As, however, he now quite threw up his business habits—on the speculation, I suppose, of soon being allowed to relinquish them altogether—and Mrs Foggerton, who never gave too much attention to household affairs in her most energetic days, became slatternly and careless in the extreme, whilst she allowed her servant-girl to absent herself at her pleasure—I felt too uncomfortable to spend the three or four days of leisure left to me when my arrangements were completed in Bartlett's Buildings.

Mr Gently had just at that time some large sales of landed estate to carry out in the neighbourhood of Epping, and as Amelia had not been in good health, he thought the opportunity a favourable one to hire a cottage at Loughton. The family had just settled themselves down there for the summer, and had given me a friendly invitation to spend the Sunday with them, and as I knew that I should pass the day very pleasantly in their

society, I seized on the favourable opportunity of turning my back on Mrs Foggerton's now utterly hopeless housekeeping.

On arriving at the inn at Aldgate, where I was to take the Epping coach, I found the vehicle, which in those days was a smart one, making a stay apparently beyond its authorized time. This was all right for me who had been running quickly to catch the coach; but several elderly ladies and gentlemen inside seemed very much irritated at the delay. The coachman and porter also, who were busy overhauling the luggage in the boot, looked very red in the face; and I overheard the latter, as he sent down one or two heavy boxes on to the pavement, mutter something about "pettifogging lawyers," which he apparently intended to be heard by a gentleman who was standing on the step of the booking-office—with an evident intention not to quit the yard until something he wished to have done was carried through.

On entering the yard I soon discovered that this troublesome customer was no other person

than my old pragmatical friend, Mr Paul Sadgrove, and that all this stir was occasioned by his desiring to carry in his own hand outside the coach, a small carpet bag, after the porter had, as a matter of course, consigned it to the boot. The coachman was at first unmanageable, declaring that he was already behind time; but as the young lawyer had repeatedly protested "that the bag contained articles of value," and followed up the information that he was a member of the legal profession by a neat abstract of the Law of Bailments, the boot was overhauled for his satisfaction. Mr Sadgrove at first looked rather blank when he perceived that I was to be his fellow-traveller, for he had availed himself of Mr Gently's general invitation to run down to Loughton, and probably intended to have entirely his own way with the two young ladies during a pleasant Sunday. However, as the mishap was past his cure, and he was just then gratified by obtaining possession of his carpet bag, he put on a pleasant expression of countenance, and shook me by the hand, as much as to convince me

that I was just the person with whom he was desirous of riding down to Loughton. When the horses were starting, he made the coachman, to whom he had taken a dislike, pull them in again; and then, leisurely mounting up to the seat behind the driving-box, proposed to me that I should take my place by his side. He told me that there was nothing worth seeing on the road before we came to Woodford, and that we could have a little pleasant conversation together.

“I hope, Mr Elvington,” said Mr Sadgrove, when he had at last deposited the carpet-bag between his legs, and had allowed the coachman to drive on, “that you will not object to my reading for a few minutes. I have a book in my pocket to which I am desirous of calling our young friend Amelia’s attention in the course of to-morrow afternoon. She is apt to be too volatile on a Sunday, and I think that by requesting her to get by heart a few passages of religious poetry, it may, together with the Collect of the day, fix her attention. Of course you agree with me in opinion.”

"If I do not, Mr Sadgrove," I answered, pleasantly, for I did not wish to offend my pragmatistical companion just then, "Miss Gently will; and she takes the entire control of Amelia's education, and is bringing her up in an excellent manner.

"Miss Gently," said Mr Sadgrove, as he took a little volume out of his pocket, "is an admirable female—very accurate and precise. It is in order to avoid placing in my young friend's hands any book which may not meet her sanction, that I am desirous of running my eye over these poems. My brother Barnabas, who is incumbent of a Proprietary Chapel, in which all the first people in Bath sit under him—the Carrions, the Radnugers, the Topsies—indeed all the wealthy East and West Indian families there—tells me that female serious writers, with the best intentions in the world, are sometimes wanting in precision in their notions. A serious thing this, Mr Elvington, when their works are to be placed in the hands of children, is it not?"

“A serious thing, indeed, Mr Sadgrove,” I replied. “Pray do not let me interrupt you, while you go through the poems at your leisure.”

CHAPTER VI.

MR PAUL SADGROVE'S attention was for some time engrossed by his book, but he returned it at last to his pocket. He then treated himself to a glance of quiet scrutiny at his fellow-traveller's face, ascertained that the carpet bag had no intention of escaping from the custody of his legs—moved one hand gently over the other in lieu of giving them a good hearty rub, and then commenced a little conversation by observing “that it was better not to hazard a confident opinion about anything, but that he thought we were going to have a fine afternoon.”

“As far as I can see, Mr Sadgrove,” I replied,

"there is no doubt about it. The weather is settled fair."

"Well," retorted my pragmatical companion, "that opinion may not be a correct one, after all. There were a few drops of rain on the pavement as I walked along Bedford Row, and my weather-glass is going down. But in the society of Mrs Gently and the two young ladies, even a wet Sunday will pass pleasantly, Mr Elvington—quite pleasantly."

"So you have come to the old topic again, Mr Sadgrove," I said to myself, "and I must therefore be on my guard against you, for this is not the first time that you have tried to make mischief between myself and my old friends. However, I think I am a match for you."

"Miss Gently and Miss Fanny Gently," continued Mr Sadgrove, "are two admirable young ladies. To be in their society is like reading a moral fiction by Mrs Opie. I think I may venture to assert that I have heard some people observe that Miss Gently is too positive in her opin-

ion, and is apt to take dislikes without cause, but I should be very loath to embody the information in an affidavit. Somebody was observing to me the other day that Fanny Gently was a little giddy at times, and that Mrs Gently was allowing Amelia to get the upper hand of her. I think, Mr Elvington, that you were the very person who made that remark—in confidence, of course—but in any case, a person of your quickness of judgment must have made up your mind concerning the little peculiarities of the family. Miss Mary Ann gives her opinion concerning every one, I can assure you.”

“Miss Gently’s opinion is worth having,” I replied, very briefly; perhaps to the dismay of Mr Paul, who had been bent upon drawing me out. His failure rather ruffled his temper, so he determined to hurt my pride, if he could do nothing else.

“I have heard it asserted,” said Mr Sadgrove, in a careless tone, “that our friend the solicitor and his good lady married early in life. Dear

me! I am the most accurate man as to dates in the world, and now I cannot remember the year. However, they were young, and, Mrs Gently would tell you, foolish. It surprises me that Miss Gently, with her talents for household management, should have been allowed to remain single so long. Can you oblige me by accounting for it, Mr Elvington?"

"My solution of it," I replied, "is a simple one. Miss Gently, it appears to me, is not at all desirous of quitting her sphere of usefulness in her own family. She always tells you as much if you talk about matrimony in her presence."

"And I suppose that if Miss Fanny's attractions exert their legitimate influence," continued Mr Sadgrove, "Miss Gently, in your opinion, just—what shall I say?—steps in the way. Eh, Mr Elvington?"

"Fanny Gently," I replied, evasively, "will be the pretty engaging young creature she is at present for the next five or six years to come, and so need not be in any hurry to marry. However,

Mr Sadgrove, you have the advantage of me when you talk about the Misses Gently's chances of matrimony, for it is a subject on which I have formed no decided opinion."

"And unless people are decided," retorted Mr Paul, spitefully enough, "they are always falling into inaccuracies. That is just what Miss Mary Ann is in the habit of telling Mrs Gently. Now, I have formed an opinion on the subject, although I reserve to myself full right to alter it. I think, Mr Elvington," said Mr Sadgrove, with a sweet smile, "that Mr Gently would be a person exceedingly difficult to please with a son-in-law. Have you ever observed how cautious he is in the conduct of his business, and how shrewdly Mrs Gently manages her household affairs?"

"When the happiness of a child, and that child is a daughter, happens to be at stake," I answered, "a parent is quite right to take every proper precaution before he allows her to link her fate with that of a stranger."

"I knew that you would say so," exclaimed Mr

Sadgrove, triumphantly. "I never made the observation myself, but other people before you have observed to me that the Gentlys would be very punctilious and difficult people to have business with, if one were negotiating a settlement in their family. Mr Gently would make a severe scrutiny into one's private affairs, and Mrs Gently and her eldest daughter would not allow the matter to go further unless every suspicion concerning his bachelor habits were removed. Let us put a case, Mr Elvington, for it clears one's ideas wonderfully. A gentleman, very well educated and full of honourable feeling, might be tempted by Mrs Gently's friendly ways to make fair and proper advances to Miss Fanny, and, after all, meet with a rebuff—a humiliating thing to a sensitive temper—because he had little or no private property. How unpleasant such an occurrence as that would be, would it not? Why, here we are at Woodford, I declare!"

"As we are about to change horses at this roadside inn, I suppose we are," was my reply; and the country begins to look pretty.

As Mr Sadgrove had gained the end he had in view, whatever that might be, he thought fit to change the subject of conversation, and treat me to a dull account of the government management or mismanagement of Epping Forest. Driving along a pleasant road, skirted on each side by the wood, we came at last to a pretty green, set in a girdle of tall trees and picturesque cottages; and about half a mile beyond it, arrived at a little wooden house, enclosed by a high garden paling, which stood nearly opposite to a modern Norman church. This, Mr Sadgrove, who had paid his visit to the family a Saturday or two previously, informed me was our friend's temporary country-box; so, after annoying the coachman by insisting on his getting off the coach and placing the carpet-bag carefully upright against the gate-post, he dismounted at his leisure, and gave a sharp pull at the bell. Amelia Gently, who heard the ring, came bounding towards us like a fawn, as the gate was opened, and followed us into a pretty little parlour with a bow-window, where we found Mrs Gently at work, and

Fanny looking like a perfect May Queen. I put my old friend into a very good temper by observing that the garden before the house was one bower of magnificent rose-trees, and that the selection of such a pretty little snuggerly must have been the result of her own taste after a personal inspection. Mr Sadgrove, who had carefully ascertained that he was to sleep in the bedroom which had a southern aspect, and had retired to it in order to wash his hands and deposit the carpet-bag in a place of security, now returned to us, and we began talking about indifferent matters.

Mr Sadgrove, however, although he was allowed to have his own way in everything, even in his preference of the architecture of Cecil's Chapel in Millman Street to that of the Norman structure he could see out of the bow-window, was not in a very good temper. He had made up his mind to find his ally, Miss Mary Ann, at Loughton, and was disappointed at discovering that she had been compelled to return to Highgate for a week. Certain alterations of arrangement and repairs of

furniture were going on at the villa, during the absence of the family from London; and Miss Gently felt herself too much in her element, whilst lording it over mutinous carpenters, and compelling upholsterers and their workwomen to relearn their trades at her dictation, to be at all willing to bury her talents in Epping Forest. Mr Gently also, Mr Sadgrove learned, would not leave his office until very late in the evening; and as he wished to take the advice of that experienced practitioner on a difficult case he had in hand, and was too conscientious to talk about worldly affairs on a Sunday, the disappointment was provoking enough. So, as soon as the tea-table was cleared, he gladly availed himself of Mrs Gently's suggestion that her bachelor visitors should take a turn in the garden by themselves, for he thought that he might sulk in my company as much as he thought fit.

It was a beautiful evening, still and pleasant, and the garden, which had not been allowed to run to waste, presented gay and cheerful flowers enough—

pinces, sweet-williams, saucy-looking larkspurs, and beautiful moss-roses—to lure a transitory smile from the lips even of an anchorite; but Mr Sadgrove was rather angry with the buds and blossoms for attempting to conciliate him, and brushed them aside very disdainfully in silence, as he worked his way among the currant-bushes, endeavouring to spy out a robbed and defrauded one, which he might lay to the account of the thievish little fingers of Amelia. On finding also that all the fine and ripest strawberries had disappeared, he heaved a deep sigh—as much as to say that the world was getting too wicked for such a keeper of the ten commandments as Paul Sadgrove to live in it any longer. I followed my ill-natured companion through the bushes, and as he worked away with vigour, we soon turned the corner of the house and came out upon a little grass-plot before a shrubbery which just fenced off the kitchen-garden. There was a rustic table and two ornamental chairs, constructed of the roots of trees, placed upon the sward, and here we found Mrs Gently

seated with her spectacles on, delightfully busy making up nosegays, and carrying them away, after she had tied them round, to an old rusty sundial, where she was depositing her flowery treasures in a broken garden watering-pot. When she caught sight of her visitors, she appeared willing to relieve her labours by a little conversation, and called our attention to the fatigue she was undergoing in order to make the parlour handsome for us on the morrow.

“And you see how it is, gentlemen,” said Mrs Gently, “all the work is allowed to fall upon me. I have spoiled my girls for the best part of their lives, and now I reap the fruits of it. Not one of them would help me, if I were to lay down my life for them. As for Fanny, she is a regular little jilt.”

I ventured to breathe a faint denial to this outburst of motherly pride and affection—for such in reality it was; but when Mrs Gently began to talk about her daughters, one had not much chance of stopping the flow of conversation.

"I tell Fanny," continued Mrs Gently, "that she will find it all out when she gets married. However she must not expect anything of the kind, for who would marry such an idle, rebellious little creature for the sake of a pretty face? I am sure," said she, looking very knowingly at me, "Mr Paul Sadgrove would not."

Mr Sadgrove had allowed Mrs Gently's pretty nosegays to solicit his attention in disdainful silence; but the moment our hostess began to talk about her daughters and matrimony, he regained his spirits in a surprising degree. He positively laughed, as he treated us to his resolution to live and die a bachelor, and then indulged himself in a little conversation on his own account concerning matrimonial matters.

"Mr Elvington and myself," observed Mr Sadgrove, "have been discussing these subjects as we came down from London, and arrived at last at a precise conclusion. We said, Mrs Gently, that you would be difficult to please in a son-in-law."

“ Oh ! no sons-in-law for me ! ” exclaimed the good lady, with affected horror, looking all the while as if she wished to be a grandmother.

“ The gentleman who gained your approbation,” Mr Sadgrove went on to say, “ must in our opinion be of steady decided temper and domestic habits. He must have property, of course ? ”

“ Well, a little property,” said Mrs Gently, whose mind allowed itself to be lured into the track of cautious thinking habitual to her class— “ just a little to start with and furnish. Mr Gently has a lucky bag somewhere, although he very seldom allows his wife and daughters to put their hands into it. I should not be surprised if he were able to help the young couple to furnish ; but he must speak for himself. I never endeavour to control his judgment, I assure you.”

“ Good and substantial furniture is expensive,” observed Mr Sadgrove.

“ Well,” said Mrs Gently, “ there must be a drawing-room suite of rosewood, and two chimney-glasses—one in the drawing-room and one in

the dining-room. Dear me ! Why, my piano-forte cost my poor father seventy guineas ; but it really was worth the money, since it helped to amuse Mr Gently and keep him steady.

“ Ah ! what pleasant little parties,” she went on, indulging in delightful recollections, “ we used to get up in Bedford Row ; and although I had invited all the visitors for a week beforehand, Mr Gently, poor man, would wonder how it came to pass that such an amusing circle of friends all dropt in accidentally. There were the two Miss Turnbolls, who used to sing Callcott’s glees so delightfully ; and Miss Dender of Warminster, who is now the wife of Mr Slocombe the rector, and who used to go on so with Gently that sometimes I felt quite jealous. I don’t know whether you have ever met Mr Walker of Gray’s Inn at our house ; but he was an elegant young man in those days, and the beau of our little parties. He really ought to have married the second Miss Turnbull, and so I tell him now whenever I see him. He laughs, and answers that he is waiting for Gently

to work himself to death, and then he thinks that he shall marry a widow. I can't imagine," added Mrs Gently, looking very sly, "who that widow can be; but I warrant you that when she gets her liberty, she will not be fool enough to forfeit it a second time: especially to such a conceited person as Mr Walker."

Here Mrs Gently's recollections of Mr Walker were interrupted by the presence of that gentleman's rival, Mr Gently himself. He came into the garden, accompanied by Mr Simmers, who he informed us was to go to Epping with him on Monday, and attest certain deeds and documents of great importance. Of course it would not do to allow a young gentleman coming on so rapidly in the legal world as Mr Simmers was, to imagine that relaxation in any shape was necessary for his existence, and so in all probability his good-natured principal had created a little "important business," in order to give our young friend a pleasant holiday. Mr Gently at first looked rather amazed when he saw his two grown-up visitors;

but as soon as he recollected that a spare bedroom was at our disposal, expressed himself exceedingly delighted with our company.

The worthy solicitor grew very social and merry over the supper-table, and jestingly remarked, "that he never could understand how he managed to get his clients' papers into their own boxes, but now he was going to cram two of his friends and clients into a much smaller wooden-box of his own." He was, of course, very much pleased with this neat legal joke, especially as he was the parent of it himself, and allowed Mr Sadgrove to produce his gold watch twice, and even wind it up, before he proposed an adjournment to our bed-chambers.

CHAPTER VII.

IN spite of Mr Sadgrove's weatherglass, the Sunday turned out a fine one, and we spent the morning very agreeably, although in a perfectly regular and orthodox fashion. Mr Sadgrove's benevolent resolution to confine Amelia's attention during the after-part of the day to his little book of poetry, was unluckily frustrated by the presence of Mr Simmers, who had a quiet way of rendering the young lady rebellious at times. After an early tea—for the Gentlys had adopted country hours and habits for the time with a kind of fanatical zeal—our host, who had discovered by some uneasy hints dropt over the dinner-table that Mr Paul had a

legal question to ask him, bespoke his company for a walk towards Woodford and High Beach; and, as the remainder of the party seemed to be strolling about the garden in a listless manner, Mrs Gently suggested that we should take a ramble in the Forest, while she kept house during the absence of the maid-servant at evening service.

We turned into the high road—a party of four—Amelia and Mr Simmers in the van, and myself and Fanny bringing up the rear. We soon came to the opening in the hedge where a narrow path winds through the trees until it reaches a broader one which runs in the direction of High Beach. Fanny and her young sister had acquired a very fair acquaintance with the intricacies of the Forest during their three weeks' residence at Loughton, for they were in the habit of taking their morning's walk in it. At all events, she protested that nothing would please her better than to show me the pretty walks and glades; and Mr Simmers was clamorous to entangle himself in “a real wood,” and sug-

gested that if we did lose ourselves, "the chevy out of the scrape would be jolly." This wish, however, of the young gentleman was not likely to be gratified, for I learned from Fanny that, in any case, we could get on to the high ground where one skirt of the forest overlooked the other, and that when at the top of the slope, either Loughton Church or two tall poplars which grew on the left-hand side of it, would serve us for a landmark.

Amelia and her young friend soon grew weary of following the regular path, and as her sister, accompanied by myself, unconsciously followed their straying footsteps, we found ourselves at last in a pleasant bewilderment. After a while we came to a little glade, where four pathways met, and held a consultation which was the proper one to be taken. Following that to the right hand, we reached a gap in the hedge, which divided the forest from Loughton Wood, so, of course, we had a little overshot the mark. The trees, which in the public part of the forest are kept under by the

depredations of the commoners, shot up here into a fine leafy grove, with their heads glittering in the yellow light of the setting sun, which was going down in a fine tranquil evening sky.

The birds—linnets, throistles, finches—were singing in their leafy arbours a thousand carols of joy and light-heartedness, until the wood echoed again and again with their jubilant voices. The invitation to enter their haunt was too pleasant to be resisted, and we soon found ourselves following a mossy path which gradually decoyed us into a beautiful glade that opened its quiet bosom in the centre of the wood. The trees here were trained very tall, and stood round in a perfect ring; their brown and ashy-pale trunks standing side by side like slender columns surrounding a circular theatre; and the bright green leaves waving over our heads with a quiet surge, that resembled the sound of the waves breaking on a remote sea-shore. In the centre of the glade was sunk a large circular pond, very deep and quiet, and the turf, which was perfectly fresh and level, crept

downwards to its brink. Just in front of the pond stood a glorious trophy of nature's triumph over any that art can achieve, in the shape of a magnificent hawthorn bush, one crowd of sharp green leaves, between the meshes of which the wild roses had entwined their fragrant foliage, hanging garlands of their beautiful and sweet-scented red and white blossoms over the tangled mass of the thorn. The sward round us was spotted over with the wild orchis, white and purple, which abounds in the forest at this season of the year. If any visitor should seek Loughton Wood with an intention of spending an hour in this quiet little haunt of the Muses, I am sorry to inform him that the glade no longer exists. The pond has been filled up, and a thriving plantation of sapling oak and hornbeam is rapidly obliterating all trace of any break in the forest scenery.

We were rather tired with our ramble, and determined to rest here awhile before we returned to the high road, which was not far off. Amelia and Mr Simmers were, of course, much too volatile to

stand still in any spot, however beautiful, and as they began to straggle about under the pretence of gathering the orchis and other wild flowers, we soon lost sight of them, and were only reminded of their presence when a loud laugh, which was echoed by the mournful cooing of the wood-pigeons, came to us out of the trees.

Fanny and I stood upon the verge of the pond before the maybush, and watched the shadows of the trees in front of us as they waved and glittered in the mirror. The sun, which was now setting, threw a rich gold and purple glow of light across the glade, which glinted along the sward and slept quietly in the depths of the water. The dome over our heads was streaked with light fleecy clouds chequered with crimson fringes, and the birds in the thickets round about us began once more to sing and call to each other from the recesses of the woods, in a variety of dulcet and piping notes. I thought the scene beautiful, and made the observation to Fanny, who answered me in a pleasant voice.

“ You are fond of scenery, Mr Elvington, I know, and if you could only persuade yourself to make a longer stay with us, I could show you many pretty glimpses in the wood. Amelia and myself take our work-baskets into the forest, and sit there for hours together, while mamma is busy and Mary Ann is at those terrible account-books of hers. We have brought down Miss Twamley’s Wild Flowers, and two or three other books about the country, and are really becoming very learned in these matters. The day before yesterday,” said Fanny, with Cockney astonishment depicted on her pretty little face, “ we positively heard the cuckoo ! ”

“ And were caught in a smart shower before you ran home, Miss Fanny ; for that is what hearing the cuckoo means.”

“ Well, it is all very pleasant when one is in the country,” answered Fanny, “ and makes me remember when I learned ‘ Hail beauteous stranger of the grove ’ and other stupid pieces of poetry, at Miss Marks’s at Twickenham. I do wish you

would stay a few days with us, Mr Elvington. You can see nothing of this kind in that disagreeable noisy city."

"No," I replied, "Miss Fanny. I must return to-morrow. I have long learned that the best way to take these pleasant glimpses of life is just to cast a look at them and then begone on one's journey. I shall recollect Loughton Wood, however, I assure you."

"You will recollect the wood?" said Fanny, archly.

"And my pleasant partner in the enjoyment of it," was the reply. "When I return from Chartley, we will walk about the fields at Highgate, and endeavour to delude ourselves into the belief that we are in the forest. I trust that we have many pleasant walks together in store."

"They may be as many as they please as far as my wish is consulted," replied Fanny. "But dear me, Mr Elvington, how can I be talking in this way to you. It is very ridiculous of me," said she, biting her ripe under-lip, "and one thing

I am certain of, you must laugh at me behind my back, or make critical remarks, as that good little Mr Sadgrove does. But see how beautifully the trees are waving in the water. It is a perfect study for an artist!"

Just as Fanny uttered these words, a strong breath of wind agitated the leafy curtain of the grove, and swept across the pond, and as the pretty girl leaned forward to call my attention to the waving of the landscape in the water, she overbalanced herself and lost her footing. The pond was deep, and had she been immersed in it, the accident would have been rather serious; as it was, I seized her hand, and with one arm round her slender waist, dragged her safely on to the turf; she thus escaped the mischance with a mere wetting of her feet and a little fright, which made her colour come and go, and caused her to tremble all over. The danger had never been very great, but still the young creature was fluttered; and the incident altogether was just romantic enough for two people who were desirous

of coming to an understanding about each other's intentions. Fanny, her cheeks glowing, leaned on my shoulder trembling and shedding a profusion of tears, and thanking me in the most grateful terms for saving her life. As she was evidently very much agitated, I thought it best to recall our two companions and return home at once. They were soon by our side, and we all walked slowly back to the cottage.

Fanny's cheeks still glowed, and her eyes sparkled; and as she had taken off her bonnet, which I carried in my hand by the pink ribbon, her brown hair, which had fallen into confusion, escaped over her ivory forehead as if to veil blushing cheeks, and made her appear lovely beyond expression. I looked tenderly at the beautiful girl as she rested on my arm, and spoke to her softly, appeasing her agitation, and reiterating my assurances that I did not deserve the thanks she bestowed on me, for that the pleasure of watching over her and protecting her was my ample and sufficient reward.

We were soon inside the cottage, and had to tell our little accident, and make excuses for it. Mr Gently, who had returned from his walk, made his daughter relate the story of her escape with legal amplification, and after a mild cross-examination, gave his verdict against the pond ; which, he declared, had better be avoided in future walks. Mr Sadgrove, who was seated in the bow-window, looked very angry either with Fanny or the accident, or something else, and buried himself in Cowper's Task, in order to turn up a passage or two in blank verse, where people are murdered or drowned because they take a pleasant walk on Sundays ; and no doubt intended, if he found one, which he did not, to request Mr Simmers and Amelia to commit it to memory. As for Mrs Gently, she was very much alarmed at first ; but as soon as she ascertained that Fanny had come to no real harm, recovered her good spirits in a most surprising manner, and made a few sharp and witty allusions to the two parties who had got themselves into the scrape, which sent the

colour to Fanny's cheek again. Miss Gently was out of the way, or she would not have let us off so easily as her father and mother did.

How was it that, when the pretty Fanny leaned on my arm and thanked me in such grateful terms for saving her life, and I assured her in reply that the happiness I felt in watching over her and protecting her was my sufficient reward, I did not take the one step beyond, and offer myself as a guardian who was willing and ambitious to watch over the lovely young creature, and protect her for the rest of her days? This is a question I have often asked myself, and ask myself to this day.

Mr Paul Sadgrove and his unpleasant manner of insinuating the hazard of a rebuff to any possible suitor for Miss Fanny's hand, might have something to do with it; for I am proud and sensitive by nature, and my uncertain position might have kept a poor, but punctilious gentleman tongue-tied, where a less scrupulous suitor would have urged his plea.

I have also frequently recollected since, that a

few mornings before my visit to Loughton—indeed, during the preceding week, the beautiful Lady Venetia came into the library at Budesdale House whilst I was taking Mr Markham in his classics. She carried a volume of Mr Southey's poems in her hand, and, after a few ordinary compliments, addressed her conversation to me personally, informing me that she wished to renew her acquaintance with the poet, whose beauties she had been informed consisted for the most part of mere detached passages. As she had learned from her brother that I was exceedingly well read in the literature of my own country, would it be too much if she requested me to keep the volume on the library table, and mark a few passages for her perusal? Having made this little complimentary request, to which I acceded as a matter of course, she just bent her head and gracefully quitted the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY the next morning I took leave of my friends the Gentlys. They were very friendly in their manner, especially my host, who requested me to transact a little business for him in the neighbourhood, whilst at Chartley. Fanny shook hands with me cordially; but Mrs Gently seemed rather disappointed about something which perhaps she had expected to occur. Mr Sadgrove accepted Mr Gently's invitation to go over to Epsom with him; and as Mr Simmers accompanied his principal as a matter of course, I returned to London alone.

A few days afterwards, I bade farewell to my

landlord and landlady, who appeared to be allowing the world to wag as it would, and went round to Budesdale House according to my appointment. I found Mr Markham alone, for the Earl had, with his usual equanimity, crossed over to Antwerp the previous day, leaving his son until called for. The young fellow was in high spirits, for he relished the idea of our keeping house together, and had made a thousand good-natured arrangements for my comfort and entertainment. In those days no main line of railway ran near the cluster of valleys in which I understood Chartley was situated, so we had to post down to the nearest market-town, where we were met by one of the Earl's grooms, who brought over a horse and chaise. Algernon, who was of course a first-rate whip, left the man to find his way home with our luggage by some other conveyance, and seizing the ribands, touched up the horse into a brisk trot, as he called to me to jump up by his side.

We bowled along the road, which for the first two miles was a dead level, at a fine pace, my

pupil all the while brimming over with good spirits, for he was continually meeting some of the gentlemen farmers who held under his father ; and as he was a great favourite with them, they exchanged cordial greetings with each other. Indeed, the whole family were popular in their own country, for although dreadfully tyrannical in electioneering matters, the Markhams had never played off any mean tricks on their neighbours, and had always been indulgent landlords.

For the first two miles, the road followed the course of a small river visible in the distance, the view being bounded by a chain of hills of no great altitude, with detached groups of rude cottages, built of the limestone of the country, clinging to their skirts, and occasionally standing perched on their very brows ; afterwards it began to wind gradually into an undulating country, and the hills retiring into the distant landscape, gave place to eminences of a bolder outline. The river also grew narrower and more rapid in its flow, chafing among the fragments of detached rock which had fallen

from the weather-worn sides of what had now narrowed into a valley, and leapt in miniature cascades down the ledges where its bed made an abrupt descent. The road at last passed between the walls of a towering porch, formed by the pinacles of two gray rocks, which shot up into the air on each side of us, affording no glimpse on either hand, save of a few stunted oaks, warped into the rifted flank of the precipice, and a patch of deep blue sky hanging over it.

When we had fairly entered these portals, we found ourselves in a shallow valley, thickly clothed with copsewood, oaks, young beeches, and other hardy trees, with here and there the tapering obelisk of a bare gray rock towering like a gaunt giant above the thicket. The river, which, although narrowed in its bed, was still of considerable volume, ran swiftly down the valley for about half a furlong, and then, making an abrupt sweep to the left, became lost in a gorge which opened up in the rocks, and was soon hidden from view under the cover of the thick underwood, although

we could hear it tearing its way through the trees with a hoarse murmur. The road itself, however, ran straight before us, and climbed the opposite side of the steep, which was here hollowed out into a beautifully wooded amphitheatre. At this pleasant prospect, Algernon, who had been driving his nag rather too keenly, pulled him up short, and gave a long, low whistle, after which he looked about him to the right and left, protesting that these confounded hills would never do, and that in the next valley was a worse drag up than the one before us.

I knew nothing of the country myself, so I left my pupil to form his own decision. He did so pretty readily, for, although not so obstinate as the Earl his father, Mr Markham was by no means deficient in the family firmness. As soon as his mind was made up, he turned from the main road into a narrow side-track, which he told me would bring us by a sharp turn on to the river again at Chartley, and, although it contained one terrible pull, ran for the rest of the distance along the

summits of the hills, and would thus afford us a fine view.

I assented as a matter of course, and we began to climb the road at our leisure, hemmed in by two walls of gray rock, which shut one out from the world, and allowed me to indulge in my own meditations, only interrupted by the horse at times stumbling over a large piece of rock, or by the soliloquies of Mr Markham to himself; for he was getting impatient to reach Chartley before dark, and threw the blame of the delay on his nag, who certainly, if left to his own choice, seemed inclined to come to a stand-still altogether.

After we had travelled up this gorge, or rather dike, for about a mile, I was roused from my reverie by increased alertness on the part of Mr Markham, and caution on that of the horse, and discovered that we had come upon a portion of our journey which taxed the energies even of an experienced whip, although the beauty of the scenery compensated a stranger for any slight

risk he might run. The road now climbed one of the sides of the gorge itself, leaving below it as it retired an abrupt chasm of great depth, while above our heads ran sheer up into the sky a succession of tall and arrowy peaks, which the fancy might convert at will into ruined towers, mouldering bastions, or the rifted spires of cathedrals, the walls of which lay shattered at their feet.

These crags, which had been bleached into a grayish white by the atmosphere, glittered in the sunshine like silver, save where small patches of shrubs had rooted themselves into the fissures, and hung down from the rocky screen, waving in loose and graceful festoons. On the opposite side towered up from the very bottom of the rift a perfectly perpendicular face of dark rock, quite denuded of herbage, and worn into a hundred deep channels by the torrents which streamed down its sides during the winter. At its foot wound sluggishly the river we had before quitted, now hidden from the afternoon sun by the precipice,

and only allowing a straggling ray to fall upon its sullen breast at an occasional turn of the chasm.

As young Markham knew that an upset in such a place as this might be unpleasant, he followed the road with great caution, and afforded me ample leisure to call his attention to the grandeur of the scenery. Although, however, by no means insensible to the beauties of nature, he wanted at this particular time to reach home, so told me coolly to bottle up my enthusiasm for a while, and I should soon see something much more to his taste, whatever might be my own.

A sudden turn about the face of a bulky crag rounded into the form of a low bastion, brought us out of the gorge; and after climbing up a pretty steeply inclined plane for about ten minutes, we stood on the summit of the loftiest ridge of hills, where we beheld nothing on the left-hand side except the long melancholy outline of a range of blue moors; whilst on the right, beneath our feet, opened a perfect network of lovely little

valleys, interlacing each other in every direction, and glittering in the evening sun, which was just then sinking to the ridges of the more remote of them. The mist, already gathering over the basins of a few of these dales, shrouded everything in an uncertain twilight; whilst in others the little stone farm-houses, with their homesteads, stood out in the sunlight with a sharply defined outline. Mr Markham again pulled up, and, pointing with his whip to the largest valley which was stretched out just under our feet, said, in a gay voice,

“There is our crib to-night, Mr Elvington, and a worse one might be offered to you in these wild parts; you had better look a few minutes at Chartley before you make up your mind whether you intend to purchase it of us or not.”

I noticed some little self-congratulation in the tone of my pupil's voice, notwithstanding the careless manner in which he spoke, as he called my attention to the goodly heritage of his ancestors.

It was in truth a noble prospect. The hill on which we stood gradually sloped away into a valley of beautiful fertility, and through the domain of a magnificent park which occupied the lower part of it wound the river, now again a broad and tranquil sheet of water. The park itself, which was so extensive that it filled up the whole of the level space beneath us, spread out on every side, and was adorned by little hollows and ravines, adorned with pleasant plantations and clumps of noble forest trees, reposing upon the sward between them. Across the river was thrown the thin and fairy-like span of an elegant Italian bridge—its marble arches reflected in the still surface beneath, and beyond it rose a lawn sloping up to the face of a stately mansion. As far as one could make out the details in the distance, it appeared to be built of freestone, and consisted of a central portico with two grand wings, running out at each side. Behind the façade peeped several dark groups of what might be clustered chimneys, indicating that the buildings in the rear of the mansion were of

an earlier date than what was probably the grand front.

The prospect beyond was abruptly closed by the opposite eminence of the valley, which ran steeply up at the back of the building, and was clothed with a mantle of shaggy wood, through which leaped, a mere thread of white foam, a tiny cascade. Embosomed half-way in the foliage, rose a handsome square tower of modern erection, built in all probability to command a prospect of the house and the park around it. Over this tower the sun, which now began to set, threw a warm veil of yellow transparent light, and caused the gilded vane which surmounted one of the pinnacles to glow like fire. The stillness of some enchantment appeared to brood over this happy valley—nothing stirred. A herd of deer was in the park, but they were clustered together under a copse of beech: now and then a young stag leaped up and looked about him, but he immediately rested again on his haunches.

Algernon was too keen an observer not to no-

tice how much the first view of his family-mansion impressed itself upon my imagination; and since this gratified the pride of the Markhams, he might have indulged me with a prolonged survey of the prospect. As it was, he soon roused himself, observing, that if we did not wish to lose ourselves in the cross-roads at the bottom of the valleys, we must make a little haste; so we began our descent pretty briskly, winding through pleasant lanes, until we saw the river just before our feet, and the pretty village of Chartley-Markham on the opposite side of the bridge which spanned it. The dusk of the evening had already settled upon the water, and we could just see, or rather hear it, flowing with a steady current as the wheels rattled above it. Driving through a broad lane, we came upon a stately gilded gate, swung between two square massive marble piers, surmounted by rampant leopards, the Budesdale supporters. A swift run along a fine avenue of Spanish chestnuts brought us to the portal of the house, where we were welcomed by the old steward, who came down the

steps to meet us. I was glad to retire to my bed-chamber, and was soon in a sound sleep, dreaming that Fanny Gently had accompanied me on this visit to Chartley.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE Hon. Mr Markham, partly from a natural disinclination to resume his literary pursuits, and probably influenced also by a desire to promote my comfort, consumed the first few days of our residence at Chartley in consultation with his friend the steward, so that I was allowed to keep my own company, and seized the opportunity to become acquainted with my new residence.

I soon discovered that my imagination had not exaggerated to itself the grandeur of the Budesdales, when keeping up their state in the midst of their tenantry, and that I was residing in a

palace which was the show-house of the country for miles around us. When I mounted the prospect-tower, and allowed my eye to range over Chartley Dale and the valleys sloping into it; the landscape around, as far as my eyesight served me, comprised nothing, wood, heath, farm, village, or manor, which was not an appurtenance to this princely domain, and the inheritance of its lords; whilst every beacon-hill or savage dingle illustrated some feat of valour or deed of violence performed by their race in the feudal ages, during which, with their characteristic pertinacity, they waged incessant petty wars with the local tyrants of the neighbouring dales.

As for the house itself, it appeared to be the history of the Markhams wrought into architecture, and well reflected their ancient high spirit, present magnificence, and overweening pride and self-assertion in all ages. It was not, however, the very cradle of their race; for this a roofless and

rified Donjon tower, surrounded by gray stone walls, stood about a bowshot from the village of Chartley-Markham, and had been the scene of many a fierce onslaught and valiant defence during the reigns of the Plantagenets. Chartley Abbey, the present mansion—before the Reformation a small priory of Carthusians—had been granted after its suppression to the Lords of the adjoining village and manor. The fifth Lord Markham of Chartley, who lived in the flourishing reign of Elizabeth, had been seized with the passion then existing for re-edifying or erecting stately palaces, and had built the greater portion of the present edifice. This had gone down to posterity quite unmutilated and in all its venerable grandeur, until the last century, when the father of the present Earl, soon after he succeeded to the title, commenced pulling down the original structure in order to erect upon the site a magnificent palace, designed for him by Sir William Chambers.

Of the old building, then, which consisted of two spacious quadrangles, the kitchen and offices, and a third court, to be mentioned more in detail in the next chapter, he had demolished the four sides of the entrance-court, and commenced throwing along the front of the remaining quadrangle a Corinthian portico of bath-stone, when death put an end to his progress. Sir William's plan, which hung in the library, comprised, in addition to the portico, two wings extending along the back of an open colonnade, surmounted by a balustrade adorned with a row of fine statues, and terminated by two elegant pavilions; and for the interior of the building a grand quadrangle, with the four pediments above the pilasters embellished with the arms of the Budesdales, and ancient military trophies worked in the stone. The architect had also designed to place in the centre of the court a beautiful Italian fountain, and at the further end two graceful openwork iron gates

leading on to the terrace of the old pleasaunce, which he intended to retain.

The present Earl, however, either dismayed by the great expense of carrying out this sumptuous plan, or perhaps influenced by the growing admiration entertained by our great families for the architectural relics of their ancestors, had spared the remainder of the venerable pile, and contented himself with completing the wings to the grand front. This was the first part of the edifice which I rambled over, and comprised the splendid suite of rooms which it had been the favourite amusement of the deceased countess to decorate and adorn—of course, in the very meretricious style of the reign of George the Fourth. With the exception of the noble entrance-hall, with its marble pavement and great lanthorn glazed with the arms of the Markhams and the quarterings of the great families with which they had intermarried, and the magnificent bronze staircase with its

domed roof painted by Cipriani, with the apotheosis of Hercules—for although that style of decoration had gone out of date, the late Earl had insisted upon retaining it—the whole of the ball-rooms, saloons, and bed-chambers were one confused mass of velvet chairs, heavy mirrors in pseudo-classical frames, ormolu chandeliers, gilt clocks, and other nondescript articles of marqueterie. All this was dazzling and tasteless enough; but the blaze of carving and gilding, and upholsterers' tawdry colouring, instead of being subdued by the drapery, was increased to an almost blinding effect by hangings of amber satin, and a ceiling which crushed the walls with a superincumbent mass of gold and azure panneling. The range of the windows in front, however, afforded many delicious views and pretty glimpses down the quiet glades and long dreamy avenues of the park, and there was a pleasant sunny air over the rooms themselves—lofty and ample as they were

—which the countess's bad taste could not altogether extinguish.

The apartments in the venerable square behind the grand front, which, as I have before mentioned, the hand of the destroyer had left standing, contained very few rooms of any size or importance. There yet remained a handsome suite of "lodgings," as they were termed in former days, which had been fitted up for the reception of the Spanish ambassador, during the reign of the first James, and possessed a tinselled state-bed, and the remainder of the curious furniture of ebony and frosted silver. The back-front also was filled by a long low gallery in the bastard Italian style, with a stuccoed ceiling of open scroll-work, and a magnificent marble chimney-piece, in plan a central hollow circle upheld by two cupids standing on dwarf pilasters. Within the fireplace was a pair of old andirons, surmounted by the coronet and crest of the family. Opposite was thrown out

a recessed or bay oriel-window, partly stained with the arms of the Budesdales, from whence one obtained a view of the terrace and private flower-garden.

In the centre of the upper terrace—for there were two—stood a small oval basin, ornamented in the middle by a crouching bronze figure of Andromeda, which was kept playing, and threw its snowy spray into the air with a pleasant murmur. The lower terrace, adorned with grim terra-cotta figures of mythological divinities, abutted on to the flower-garden, which itself sloped down to the shrubbery that fringed the ravine, dividing the park from the steep hills in the rear of the valley. Along this dell, which was smothered in brushwood, careered a swift brook, escaping at times from the copse, and then hiding itself under it again like an urchin at play. When finally lost to view, it still could be heard brawling and hissing along, until it

bounded in a cascade over a steep dam of rough crags built to arrest its progress. After reaching the level of the pleasure grounds, the brook poured itself with a swift current into the bed of the river below it which skirted the side of the quadrangle, and then, making an abrupt bend, glided quietly before the grand front of the mansion.

The walls of this gallery—in itself interesting to a student of our Elizabethan architecture—were hung throughout with the family-portraits of the Markhams, and their cousins and relations to the ninth or tenth degree. Mixing in this family-circle, one found kings, statesmen, generals, ambassadors, men of letters, celebrated actors—indeed every man of mark who had ever partaken of their liberal although somewhat ostentatious hospitality. It became my favourite lounging-place, for, knowing the history of most of the distinguished men of my own country, I was fond of standing before

their noble and sagacious features, speculating as to their ideas of life, and how they had solved its riddle. Here also I was occasionally hunted out of my brown studies by Mr Markham, who did not at any time relish keeping his own company; and I thus entrapt my pupil into a little conversation, by means of which he learned something of the history of his own country.

Algernon was evidently rather surprised when he made the discovery that I differed from most of the occasional guests of his family in my remarks concerning the ladies and gentlemen ranged along the walls of the gallery; for I took great pains to impress upon him the fact that all these butterfly courtiers, hollow-eyed lawyers, and white-bearded noblemen, although they now hung so amicably side by side on the oaken panelling, had hunted each other down in their day like wild beasts, while old King Harry, with his legal beagles, rode in full cry after them. It staggered

him also when I called his attention to the bearded earls and stately countesses in Vandyke costume, the parents of the two or three pretty little girls holding King Charles's spaniels by a ribbon, or standing with round staring eyes doing nothing—the future mothers of the line of Budesdale—and informed him that these great ladies and gentlemen were after all only the daughters of Elizabeth's Lord Mayors, or the sons of her father's attorney-generals: for he had a pretty fair crop of them, and made them swear away one another's lives according to order.

When he heard me talk in this style, Mr Markham was in the habit of waxing rather savage, and extemporizing a pugilistic assault on my person, declaring that the Markhams had an hereditary mission to crush all Radicals and Revolutionists. At last, however, he entered into the joke of the thing itself, and even ordered the steward to remove a full-length portrait of our

British Solomon from the ambassador's dressing-room; but the old servant, who knew his master well, declared that such an act of presumption would cost him his place. Mr Markham did not relish giving way, but at last was fain to compromise the matter by degrading another friend of mine—"the first gentleman in Europe"—who filled up the end of the gallery by a flaming resemblance of himself—or rather of a very black curly wig, full figure, high stock, and elegantly polished pair of jack boots, all joined on by Lawrence to the crimson uniform of the Guards—to a less pretentious position over the fire-place in the state dining-room, and supplying the vacant place with a youthful portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

CHAPTER X.

THE part of the mansion reserved for the use of Mr Markham and myself during our residence at Chartley, consisted of a set of rooms which had been from time immemorial the dwelling of any member of the family who required a separate establishment. It was, to my thinking, the most interesting part of the whole building. The rooms ran along the second story of a small court which stood at the side of the grand quadrangle, but rather in the rear of it, and had originally been the cloister of the priory. This court had been less mutilated than the other, and still re-

tained on the upper story a row of square-headed lights, each divided by a gray stone mullion, and a course of dormer windows in the roof. The humble cloister below also remained standing, but its range of depressed perpendicular arches had been turned into a circular form, and were now overgrown by jasmine, honeysuckle, and white roses, which clambered round the windows, almost hiding them from view, and had a fine trail of ivy mantling the south-eastern wall.

The front towards the south might always have been unenclosed, or if not, one of the Markhams, certainly a lover of the picturesque, had pulled that part of the cloister down, and replaced it with a terrace bounded by a low stone wall and parapet. The ground beneath fell suddenly away, and far below ran the river, foaming and hissing where the brook leapt into it. A few rude steps down the bank led from the terrace to the bed of the river—here embowered by a natural arbour of

hazels and ashlings stooping their knees into the water, and, as it were, thirsting to drink. A small boat was moored to the trunk of one of these trees, and when Algernon declared that he would stand his reading no longer, we were in the habit of jumping into it and rowing up and down under the shade of the branches, or on the broad quiet sheet of water in front of the house, until we had sufficiently refreshed our spirits.

As to our study, it was a glorious little hermitage, quite remote from the heavy grandeur of the rest of the mansion. The same sacrilegious but tasteful hands which had broken the architectural uniformity of the cloister, had here thrown out a fine bay or projection in front of the terrace, and had carried it up to the gable of the building, where it was terminated by a kind of platform, called, I believe, a bartizan. The whole of this bay was thrown open into a tier of oriel windows, the upper one of which lighted our apartment.

The view from it was magnificent. It displayed the ridge of a richly cultivated valley which rose beyond the river, and was full of fields, cottages, hedges, clumps of detached wood, with here and there a sturdy oak standing out in the blue sunshiny sky, and terminating the prospect. My bed-room and private sitting-room adjoining had the same aspect—the roses almost hid the windows, and the martins, which built in the clustered chimneys, twittered across the casement with a shrill note.

In this bower of bliss, then, did we ensconce ourselves, and after a while compelled rather unwilling minds to return to reading up for Cambridge. Algernon was restive at first, but settled down tolerably quietly when he discovered that I only exacted his mornings from him, and was willing to accompany him in the afternoon on any pleasant excursion he chose to plan for us. As he was a Markham, he had not the slightest objection

to acting the patron, and soon gave me to understand—in a gentlemanly way, of course—that he considered me his guest merely ; so that the Earl's promise that I should find myself the master of Chartley whilst residing there, came to nothing. However, I took no umbrage at my pupil's little airs of temporary importance, for it pleased me to observe what an excellent head the fine young fellow had for management, and how sensibly he made all his arrangements. To order other people about, overlook their work, and turn his energies into an active channel, was evidently the business cut out for him by nature, and I often shrugged my shoulders when I considered how completely out of his element he would be in the lecture-rooms of T—— College, and feared that he would take a wrong turn out of utter disgust.

Algernon himself had, at the period of which I am writing, no misgivings of this kind, for he was actually panting with eagerness for the time to

arrive when he would have full license to indulge in folly and extravagance for two months at a time, and was continually pestering me with questions concerning the academic paradise to which he would be, in a few short weeks, relegated.

“Well, Markham,” I said to him one day, when I saw that he was determined not to resume “grinding” until I had satisfied his curiosity concerning the Garden of Eden on the banks of the Cam, “if you will gossip and waste your time, I suppose I must for once let you get the upper hand of me. What do you wish me to tell you about Cambridge? Shall I begin with the costume in which they will disguise your personal appearance?”

“Oh! I know all about that,” replied Algernon. “I shall have to wear a black gown, of course, and a square cap like the king’s scholars at our school.”

“Not exactly, my young friend,” was my an-

swer. "The Master of the ancient and royal Foundation of which you are a member, is very proud of his parlour boarders, I can assure you, and cannot possibly allow them to be lost in the crowd of bachelor scholars. As soon as he catches one, he attires him in what is in fact a blue stuff smock frock, but the simplicity of the outline of this garment is relieved by several rows of silver lace, which in time become tarnished. This you will surmount by what will become by the end of 'Michaelmas Term' a shocking bad hat."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Algernon, dismayed at the idea of being turned into such an academical blue coat boy as this, "what a taste the fellow must have! I will never wear such a thing."

"Then the Proctors will make a small annuity out of you—that is all, Mr Markham. But to proceed: Thus attired, you will keep chapel, hall, and lectures, and dine at the table of some thirty

solemn gentlemen, who are no bad hands at a plate of soup. When they talk to each other, their conversation will be chiefly occupied by the tittle-tattle of the College, which is kept floating about by the agency of the Gips and Bedmakers. When they condescend to address you, it will be as if speaking to an infant three years old. If you want to be very unhappy, you have the privilege of taking wine with them in the Combination Room. You may also keep your horse in the College stable."

"Well," said Algernon, sensibly enough, "I must get on with the Dons whilst I am among them. I shall have to ask them about the reading, and examinations, and so on."

"You will get very little information from them," I replied. "They will leave you, as a matter of course, to the Fellow of their body with whom you are to read, and in all probability he will be too *safe* a man to give his opinion,"

“ But he must,” said Algernon, getting dismayed. “ What is a fellow to do? If I put a direct question to my tutor, he must give me a direct answer, surely?”

“ That kind of direct answer which a very gentlemanly man who was an assistant-tutor in my time, once gave to me,” was my reply. “ Deightons, the booksellers, one day showed me half-a-dozen manuals—‘crams’ they call them there—and I asked this reverend young gentleman, for such he already was, which of them I should use? How do you think he answered me?”

“ Recommended his own book, I suppose,” said my pupil.

“ Not in a direct manner. He was drawing a curve on a black board when I asked him the question, and immediately fell into a profound fit of abstraction, with the chalk between his fingers. He then said gravely that several gentlemen had written on the subject, he knew. Mr Crammer’s

little work, he observed, contained profound views, whilst the Rev. Mr Muddle had a remarkably clear manner of expressing himself. Mr Slow-coach was a very distinguished man of his own year, but Mr Grinder's examples were thought the best for beginners. The best thing I could do would be to buy them all, together with his own little work on the same subject, and if I brought them to his rooms, he should be very happy to mark the paragraphs for me."

"What a thorough humbug!" was Mr Markham's comment.

"He was nothing of the kind," I answered. "He was a good-natured, clear-headed fellow; but the place had ruined him. He had been walking amidst academic pitfalls all his life, and had positively grown fearful of risking his opinion lest he should lose some university emolument or college distinction. But now you have heard something about the studies of your Alma Mater, you may

not be unwilling for me to turn the subject and talk about its recreations. You will be happy, no doubt, to hear that the town of Cambridge has made admirable arrangements for your indulging yourself in every possible extravagance and folly, and that the hamlet of Barnwell will supply you for ready money with an unlimited amount of vice."

"Well, Elvington, my good fellow," said Mr Markham, "it is natural at my age for one to launch out a little. My father will bully me, of course; but my brother Edgar—Brockhall you call him—has stood it all before. He lost seven thousand pounds before he went to Canada."

"Yes, Mr Markham," I replied; "you will have two paths set before you—glory and pleasure: the choice of Hercules, in fact, as the Public Orator will no doubt remind you when he makes an original speech in Latin over you in your Master's hood. If you choose the path of pleasure,

the gentlemen of your rank and class in the College will insist upon your pursuing it in a quiet and rather refined manner; and, keeping this caution in view, you may hunt, race, gamble, and bet to the extent of Lord Budesdale's patience, and perhaps a little beyond it."

"What! run horses at Newmarket!" cried Algernon, with his eyes sparkling with delight.

"If you choose to be cleaned out by a parcel of vulgar sharpers," was my answer. "If you prefer it, you may bet on the tripos and college examinations, or the colour of a pensioner's waistcoat, or the tie of the Master's rather portentous shoes—in fact, on anything."

"After all, the time will be short," ejaculated my pupil, mournfully. "Three years will soon run away. After that I suppose they will send me abroad, or marry me to a dwarf like my cousin Allingston, or a mad woman like poor Lackland.

The fellows at Cambridge gamble most awfully, do they not?"

"I hear they do," answered I. "In my time there was a great deal of mere vulgar schoolboy 'rowing,' as they call dissipation up there—furious wine-parties, town and gown rows, and so on. If a pensioner got inebriated, he might find himself when he awoke from a pleasant dose laid out in state on the College grassplot, having two branch candlesticks with lighted candles at his head and feet. If a crusty senior fellow in N—— Court objected to a little vocalization in the rooms below him, a pianoforte was brought out into the open air, and five or six young gentlemen extemporized a duet upon it, accompanied by a chorus of voices which were not so dulcet as those of the choristers in the chapel. Well, they tell me that all these follies are out of date, and that the Authorities, who never see more than the half of anything, congratulate themselves on the reform. But I am

sorry to say that since the undergraduates have become more sedentary, a spirit of thoughtless gambling has crept among them. They lose and win their hundreds a-year, and think themselves 'quiet men.'"

"What! at cards!" cried Algernon, with great glee.

"They scarcely know how," was my answer. "Some of them are the sons of country clergymen, and their fathers are ruined by their extravagance and folly."

"But what right then," retorted my pupil, "have they to send them to a place where they are expected to keep company with the sons of men like my father. I suppose the young vagabonds are to be parsons, and their fathers expect that we shall give them a living out of mere compassion. I assure you that if they fall into my hands, I will show them no mercy."

"I do not think you will, Mr Markham," I

replied; "and now you have given me sufficient proof of how very eager you are to plunge into a course of folly and unsteadiness—any warning I may give you will only make you worse, I can well see; so if you please we will learn a little more about Dido and Æneas."

CHAPTER XI.

WHILST I was leading this easy life at Chartley, at times inwardly questioning myself how long fortune intended to allow such an unlucky fellow to sleep away his existence without some new vexation to wake him up, I received a letter which reminded me of a couple who had almost vanished from my memory. The note, which was nicely perfumed and enclosed in an ornamental envelope, was in the lady-like Italian hand of Mrs Foggerton, and as it was no unfair specimen of the young wife's talent for viewing things

in a wrong light, I copy it for the benefit of the reader.

BARTLETT'S BUILDINGS,

12th August 18—.

MY DEAR MR ELVINGTON,—As my dear Charles and myself have always found in you not merely an inmate of our poor house, but a kind and sincere friend, you will no doubt be happy to learn from me that arrangements have been made by our family friends which will enable Mr Foggerton, at no remote distance of time, to attain to eminence in the higher walks of his profession. His uncle, who, up to this period, has never behaved to Charles with the usual generosity of a wealthy relation, has at last consented to advance him £500, and, upon receiving this ready money, my husband lost no time in entering himself of the University of Edinburgh. He will in time, I have no doubt, rise to be one of the first physicians

of the day, and many a pleasant laugh we shall have, when we are riding in our own carriage, at the troubles of our early married life.

As for my own arrangements, I quite agree with Charles, that however desirous he may be of the pleasure of my society whilst studying at Edinburgh, the small sum out of which he has at last shamed his relative, will not be sufficient to obtain me the comforts my delicate state of health renders necessary. I have also a suspicion that during the severe course of reading to which he is about to subject himself, the company of a person so foolishly and unreasonably attached to him as myself would only be an impediment to his success. I have therefore accepted an offer made to me by my dearest mamma, and shall reside with her during Mr Foggerton's career at the University.

Of course, the happy change in our arrangements, of which I am sure you will be glad to

hear, enables us to give up this dismal, odious house, especially as the landlord is willing to take it off our hands; and as we would not for the world behave unhandsomely to so kind a friend as Mr Elvington, my husband desires me to give you the earliest possible notice of our intended removal. Trusting that you are enjoying yourself in the society of the Hon. Mr Markly, and surrounded by the delightful scenery of your new abode,

Believe me to remain,

My dear Mr Elvington,

Sincerely yours,

MARIA FOGGERTON.

Maurice Elvington, Esq.

Chartley Abbey.

Just as I was conning this very far-sighted specimen of Mrs Foggerton's reasoning powers, and endeavouring to convince myself that her "dear Charles," although of course he would read like a

maniac, would deny himself any comforts or recreations which fell in his way whilst at Edinburgh, Mr Markham, who had received a letter from his sister by the same post, came into the study looking very unhappy. The young man, who had all his feelings about him, was too much moved to be enabled to tell me the intelligence which had disturbed him; so he just put the letter into my hand, and requested me to give him my honest opinion "of such deuced bad news, and whether Ven had told him the worst or not."

On glancing my eye over the letter, I learned from it that Lord Budesdale, whose health had been declining for some time past, had been seized with a dangerous illness at Brussels—indeed, had at one time been given over by his physician, but was now rather better, and would return to England as soon as it was safe for him to travel. After staying a few days in London, he would seek his native air at Chartley, and might be expected

there in about three weeks from the date of the Lady Venetia's letter. His sister promised to write to Algernon again, and desired him in the meantime to make a few preparations for the Earl's reception. I returned the letter to my pupil, telling him that the intelligence was serious, but that the crisis of his father's illness was evidently over, and that it was fortunate that Lord Budesdale had been seized with it in such a convenient city as Brussels. This satisfied Algernon, who had long since discovered that Maurice Elvington did not look at the bright side of things; nor was it probable that he should do so after his downfall in life—of which, of course, Mr Markham knew nothing.

Before the three weeks had quite expired, Lord Budesdale, who did not understand that any one should send his mandates to his own children whilst he could hold a pen between his fingers, issued a mandate in his own handwriting to Mr

Markham, coldly apprizing him of the day fixed for his return to Chartley. The Earl's hand appeared rather unsteady, but there was no feebleness in the wording of his letter—indeed, every line he wrote was calm and collected to a remarkable degree. As the appointed day drew near, my pupil, who loved and respected his somewhat stern parent, became very restless, and the old steward made a terrible stir and bustle with the servants under him. The major-domo knew his master well, and was aware that, unless welcomed home with some degree of ceremony, Lord Budesdale, invalid though he was, would never overlook the slight to his dignity.

When the important evening arrived, and the Earl's carriage was heard rolling down the avenue, the great bell was tolled in the kitchen-court, and all the domestics, who were drawn up in two rigid lines in the noble hall, stood as stiffly and rigidly as the marble statues before which they had been

grouped. As for Mr Markham and his tutor, we planted ourselves on the landing of the great staircase, and there stood in remote dignity ; for if his own son had actually mingled in the press below, even in order to greet his own father earlier than he otherwise could do, Lord Budesdale would have expected the family coats and quarterings to have fallen out of the hall windows.

As I stood under the painted vaulting of the dome, contemplating its noble proportions and the dim unworldly figures of gods and heroes which, almost obliterated as they were in the fading sunset, appeared to float along upon the dusk atmosphere ; as I gazed on the rich emblazonings, gules, or, argent, and sable, with chevrons and bends illuminating the shields which adorned the lofty central lanthorn, and tinted with their gorgeous hues the white marble pavement ; as I looked down on the hushed, almost awe-struck, group of domestics that stood marshalled from the entrance

of the vestibule down to the foot of the grand staircase beneath, I thought that this scene of frigid ceremony well harmonized with the cold, haughty person for whose arrival at the home of his ancestors it had been arranged. I called to mind what Lord Budesdale's walk, or rather march, through life had been up to this period; how as an infant he saw the light in the midst of these marble saloons and galleries, storied with the effigies of twenty generations of Markhams, and how bells had rung round, bonfires blazed, and tenantry feasted in the park, because a lord was born to Chartley. I then endeavoured to realize him when grown to man's estate and well read in the lesson which the institutions of his country were calculated to teach him; I thought of him as released from some courtly clergyman, and forthwith united to his beautiful countess, whom by mere accident he really loved; and then both of them launched into a masquerade of pomp and

splendour for the rest of their days, the scene illumined with a blaze of wax lights to supply the lack of nature's glorious sunshine, and the crowds of mortals around them in fancy dresses—knights of the garter, maids of honour, Gold Stick, Silver Stick, and all the pageantry of courts.

And now behold the end of it all! The great man must die: die like Roger or Humphrey in the lodge at his park-gate. The Budesdale leopards, terrors as they are to the poacher and footpad, cannot keep out the dread spectre: he will stalk to the Earl's bedside and bid him begone to the world of shadows. When the "be all and end all" is over, nothing remains save to throw the mere dust and ashes into a coffin, whether of elm or mahogany and crimson velvet, and finally carry it to the marble mausoleum, erected by his lordly progenitor within the grove of Chartley Park, and let it rest there, unseen, forgotten, until the noble

heir is laid beside his father. The other poor relics of humanity sleep after this fitful fever under the great yew-tree in the pretty green churchyard of Chartley-Markham, and their dreaded master is stored away in his own mausoleum—that is the only difference.

As Lord Budesdale slowly ascended the magnificent flight of steps which swept up to the entrance of the hall, a subdued expression stole over the features of the domestics; they were now in the presence of the master for whom they felt something of that reverence with which they knelt down to their religious duties in the chapel. I observed that the Earl, although he walked slowly and leaned on the arm of his beautiful daughter—whose own classical features revealed no more outward signs of feeling than the marble Juno she was just then brushing with her shawl—he still endeavoured to hold himself upright, and maintain the demeanour of the great nobleman. When the

servants bowed and curtsied respectfully, and the old steward welcomed his master home with a few words of ceremony, he briefly replied with the quiet dignity which had become habitual to him, and passed on.

It was not until he began to climb the staircase that I noticed how feebly Lord Budesdale walked, and that his cheek was pale and emaciated. However, although his mere physical powers might fail, the nature of the great man was not to be subdued by a struggle with bodily decay. The Earl's eye was still as calm and his features as serene as methought I had ever beheld them. Altogether, it seemed as if Lord Budesdale had, by the stroke of some magic wand, become some twenty years older and feebler in his frame, but without any exhaustion of his intellect. It was evidently his will that all around him should not recognise the prostration of his bodily strength; for he watched his household narrowly and sus-

piciously, although quietly, and his features only relaxed from the severe expression they wore when he had convinced himself that his servants had not the presumption to pity him.

As his father reached the last flight of stairs, my pupil, who had been all the while struggling with his own feelings, advanced towards him and proffered his arm, in order to assist him on to the landing ; but this displeased the Earl, for he motioned the young man back rather sternly. He then seemed to recollect himself and be sorry for his ill-temper, for he spoke a few kind words to his son ; but there was none of that cordiality in the tone of his voice with which most fathers address their children. Lord Budesdale received my own congratulations with the voice which I had learned was habitual to him when perfectly satisfied with people who had merely to carry out his arrangements, and then, accompanied by his daughter, retired slowly to his own private apart-

ments. In about an hour's time he sent for Algernon, who spent the rest of the evening with him, so that I was left alone in my own little chamber over the cloister, in something like a fit of low spirits; for I had learned to respect Lord Budesdale, although I could not worship an Earl as the people about him did, and was much shocked at beholding the sudden alteration in his appearance.

CHAPTER XII.

THE return to his native air appeared to produce a favourable effect on the health of Lord Budesdale, and he rallied considerably. I saw very little of him myself, for, as in health so in sickness, the proud old nobleman kept all around him at an awful distance, and allowed no one to intrude upon the stately seclusion in which he shrouded himself in his private apartments, unless specially invited to enter them. Mr Markham was expected to visit his father for about two hours every afternoon; but a civil message from the Earl, to the purport that I would not allow his

son's studies to undergo any interruption on account of his parent's illness, told me in civil terms that I was to make my good-tempered pupil my companion for the rest of the day as usual. The Lady Venetia, his sister, passed the greater part of her time in the sick-room, but we occasionally came across each other as we were passing through the several parts of the mansion.

The dislike which, from the first day I encountered her, I entertained towards this very beautiful woman was no doubt the result of prejudice, founded on the account Mr Simply gave me of her. Poor Sir William also, who never failed to see clearly the right path for other people, whilst he deliberately turned his own feet into the wrong, was always declaiming against the "peacocks," as he called them—meaning the Salisburys and Conynghams of his day; and his pretty little scandalous stories had no doubt given his nephew a very bad opinion of the whole class. However,

whatever might be the cause, I never could reconcile myself to the superciliousness of Lady Venetia's deportment towards me, even after I had discovered that, like the Earl her father, she possessed talents which extorted my admiration, and good qualities which rendered her estimable. I could not also suppress a certain feeling—say one of flattered complacency—when it came to pass that a woman of such ability manifested a desire to avail herself of my assistance in her private studies; although she rather civilly bespoke it than requested my advice as a boon.

Altogether, it was with very mixed feelings that I contemplated this strange turn of the tide. Here was Lady Venetia Markham, the only daughter of the patrician house of Budesdale, an inhabitant of the same mansion with Maurice Elvington, the ruined gentleman. I knew little about the lady—cared less for her, methought—and yet, from some strange feeling that haunted

me, I bewailed day and night the evil destiny which had thrown this "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" across my path, when I flattered myself that I had lost sight of her for ever. Had I been merely the person for whom her ladyship no doubt mistook me—a graduate of my University—a gentleman perhaps rather by claim of education than by right of any social position, who was availing himself of a very usual resource to maintain himself, and obtain an influential patron, before he went to the bar or entered the church—common sense would have told me that Lord Budesdale's daughter was, according to the rules of English society, entitled to a certain share of the respectful deference which her brother's tutor could not avoid paying to the high character and advanced age of the venerable peer. The slightest confession of inferiority—the merest receding before the great lady, in place of the gentlemanly courtesy paid to the elegant woman, would no doubt have

satisfied her haughty disposition ; for she was in many respects a kind and reasonable woman.

Haughty, however, the Lady Venetia by nature was, and something more ; for although adorned by the refined features and noble bearing of the Markhams, she had inherited from the Countess, whose family had only climbed up in the stock-jobbing era of the last century, something very much resembling mere vulgar arrogance : and the latter imposed quite as much upon the common herd of those about her as did the stateliness of the Earl ; but to a scrutinizing perception and finer sense, it denoted a tincture of blood by no means so deep and pure as that of the lords of Chartley. Altogether, this was just such a lady as a ruined offshoot from the Maurices ought not to have encountered so soon after his own pernicious, headlong fall ; especially if he had feelings to preserve from laceration, and pride to keep unwounded. Had the thought ever entered my

head that an evil genius would have brought us both together in the same house, Mr Markham and the University of Cambridge might have gone on together as well as they could, for I should never have listened to the Earl's request to become his son's mentor for one minute.

By the time I first encountered Lady Venetia after her arrival at Chartley, my mind was made up as to the course to be pursued: it was to stand on the defensive. Nothing could be more chilling than the first few words which passed between us. That Lord Budesdale's daughter should treat her brother's tutor with something resembling well-bred contempt mingled with a little condescension, no doubt appeared to the great lady reasonable enough; but that he should return it with perfect self-possession by no means satisfied the aggressing party. Of course, I should never have detected the lady's discomfiture from her manner, for Lady Venetia was as great an adept in concealing her

feelings as her father could possibly be ; and feelings they both had, flowing in a strong current, deep and rapid : but the ingenuousness of her brother let me a little behind the curtain.

Algernon one day treated himself to what was rather an unusual thing with him—for he cared nothing about Whig or Tory—a political discussion ; and when he discovered that he was talking nonsense, grew irate, because I would not see everything in the same light as a Markham did. At last he thought fit to put on an air of disdain, and inform me, in the style of a person who was calling the attention of another to some misconduct committed by him, that his sister, when they were alone together, had expressed some surprise that I found occasion to differ from her brother in my opinions so very frequently, especially if she happened to be present. Now this complaint, although one could not well take umbrage at it, afforded me the opportunity I had long sought of impressing upon

my pupil's mind a little fact which he could never have learned from any member of his own family ; namely, that a person had positively a right to entertain political opinions although he did not happen to have inherited a grand domain like Chartley, together with some hundred ancestors at his back. I told Algernon, however, that I regretted that any words uttered by me had ever offended his sister ; but added, with some emphasis, that my opinions, such as they were, did not admit of compromise or concealment. So far as it concerned himself, I was only teaching him beforehand a lesson he would learn in a much more disagreeable manner the first session he took his seat in the House ; which lesson was, that he must learn to advocate his family-politics in a manner which did not wound the self-love of the other members of the Commons. I ended by embodying a few other remarks in a pithy sentence or two, not personally gratifying to my pupil's vanity, in

order that he might carry the lesson in his memory.

When Mr Markham discovered that he had received a lecture where he intended to give one, he was dreadfully offended, of course ; but our little quarrel soon blew over. I thought no more at the time of what was in reality Lady Venetia's message ; but have no doubt that much passed between the brother and sister which my young friend did not think it quite prudent to communicate, and that her blood was at that time up to fever-heat, if not actually boiling in her veins.

The Markhams had many good qualities, and were more inclined to bear with the foibles of their fellow-creatures—that is, such of them as were completely in their power—than many families which are always making a parade of their philanthropy. But they had been, from the day of their planting in England, a self-exalted race, and their history during the feudal ages was little less than

a record of crimes, of violence committed to avenge some imaginary insult, or even the mere contradiction of their headstrong pertinacity and self-will.

But in civilized times dissimulation is set to work to do the business of open, honest hatred; and doubtless the Lady Venetia admitted to herself that things could not be carried on at present in the same high-handed fashion that they were in former times: at all events, her conduct and deportment towards me altered very suddenly. Either, as I have hinted, she determined to dissemble, and defer the gratification of her pique until a favourable opportunity, or she acknowledged to herself that it was unreasonable in any one to persist in an arrogant assumption of superiority over a person who was determined not to be brought on his knees by the mere frown of woman. Perhaps, and this is the most reasonable supposition after all, the Lady Venetia really grew weary of the tedium of an existence passed in such

perfect seclusion. To a kind of terrestrial goddess who had lately danced along on the full brimming tide of a brilliant career—who had heard adulation in each whisper, and received homage from the breath of every sigh—one who scarcely trod our common earth, and could not stir without planting her foot on the necks of the miserable herd crouching in her path—it was a sad change to be compelled to sit for long dreary hours in a sick man's room—even though he was her father—keeping the company of her own thoughts, or gazing disconsolately, with a closed book in her hand, upon the long drowsy avenues of the park, whilst her ear was filled with the melancholy murmur of the waterfall. The mind requires not only to be well stored, but well tutored, which can endure to be thus thrown back upon itself and its own wandering, unsteady thoughts, no longer held in check by the discipline of other intellects, and hourly conflict with their healthy vigour.

But, whatever might be her motive, the Lady Venetia after a while condescended to seek the society, of which indeed she was always fond, of her good-natured brother, and of course was compelled at times to sit with us in our little study. By degrees, also, she abated in her lofty bearing and reserved manner towards myself, and even resumed her poetical studies under my direction. As the veil of coldness and reserve was gradually thrown off, I saw more of her real character, and was glad to discover no small amount of good sense and right feeling in it; although many of her ideas were narrow and some of her views distorted: so that it seemed that a bad education and class prejudices had more than half-spoiled a woman of no ordinary abilities. She was attached, as I have said before, to Algernon, and watched over her sick parent with a devotion commendable in any daughter; but in her case the more to be admired, because the

proud old Earl would have been quite as well satisfied had he been consigned to the care of hired attendants, whilst his daughter kept up the state of the family at Chartley. But she nursed and tended him with the affection and assiduity of a poor man's child ; for strong after all were the bonds which linked all these cold, lofty personages one to another.

Of the conduct and bearing of the Lady Venetia towards myself, I could no longer make any reasonable complaint ; it was at last almost conciliating, although not exactly friendly. She occasionally indulged a sarcastic humour, which lurked beneath all the exquisite refinement of her manner : for she could unmask the face of society when it suited her ; and as my own temper had been soured by the signal misfortune of my life, I had no reluctance to bear my part in a tilt against my fellow-creatures. She would frequently request my opinion on some topic of conversation, and

treat it with respect, even when differing from it, and she permitted herself to display the many little signs of acquiescence with which ladies know how to intimate to one of the other sex that they respect and esteem him. Still there was no descent from her high station in all this—no derogation from her position as daughter of Lord Budesdale, and sister of my right honourable pupil.

At last the time arrived when the society of a beautiful and high-bred woman exerted its legitimate influence over what was after all no austere temperament : I beheld her enter the study with pleasure, and viewed her departure from it with regret. In short, considering the seclusion in which I was then living, with no society save that of Algernon, whose character, naturally boyish, had not yet been rendered more manly by any intercourse with the world ; considering that my days when not in the study were for the most part

consumed in looking out upon the monkish little quadrangle, or lounging in the gallery—a place so still, that if a door shut in another part of the building, the sound echoed along it like distant thunder—communing there with the effigies of hoary statesmen clad in furred robes, or the portraits of amiable and beautiful peeresses attired in the elegant costume—elegant with all its drawbacks—handed down to us by the lustrous pencil of Reynolds; it is not surprising that a face, which certainly had inherited its best features from theirs, should have haunted my day-dreams, or hovered over my sleep at night. At all events, Maurice Elvington, deluded or not, enjoyed a few happy hours, and for a while forgot that “out of suits with fortune” as he was, he could never hope, in this world at least, to make up the quarrel with his destiny.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT the expiration of a few weeks after his return to Chartley, Lord Budesdale had so far regained his health as to be enabled to ride round the drives of the park, accompanied by the Lady Venetia, who was her father's constant companion. He frequently also, when the days happened to be sufficiently warm (for we were now in the later autumn), had a chair placed on the terrace at the back of the mansion, where he would sit reading or enjoying the fresh air and beautiful prospect. As, however, it was not his pleasure that any of his servants should look on their master, reduced as he

was to the state of a feeble invalid, strict orders were issued that when any of the Household had occasion to pass from front to rear of the grounds, they must go round by way of their own court, and not through the house. I felt some sympathy with the feelings which instigated a proud man to hide his decay from the people he ruled over, and carefully, of my own accord, refrained from encroaching on the Earl's solitude; especially since the Lady Venetia was usually seated by his side.

One day, when young Markham had informed me that his father was out for a drive, I crossed through the hall and great court, and from thence by a passage boldly on to the terrace; but there to my surprise saw Lord Budesdale still seated: his daughter's chair, however, was vacant. It was one of those calm afternoons which are sometimes vouchsafed to us in the autumn; and the Earl, who had a book on his knee, which he had allowed to

remain unopened, was evidently enjoying the still beauty of the evening in a trance of profound meditation. Before his eyes lay stretched out a magnificent prospect, grand in itself, and endeared to the lord of it all as his ancestral inheritance; for Lord Budesdale's dignity and importance—those concrete attributes which in a great English magnate are as much assigned to his possessions as himself—had been from his childhood partly derived from the bold crags and bosky picturesque dells on which he was now resting his aged eyes, and they doubtless brought back to his mind a thousand recollections of happy rambles through them in his youth, or pleasant hours wiled away in their recesses after his marriage with his beautiful Countess, to whom he had been a husband only too fond and indulgent.

The sun, already declining, cast a veil of golden haze over the summit of the woods, which climbed up the hollows and clung round the rifted peaks

of the cliff, towering above the western boundary of the park. In the ravine below nestled a dense slumberous mass of copsewood, tinged with the magical hues of autumn ; the beeches in their burnished mantles of golden brown, the elms a sunny umber, the oaks a deep russet, whilst the alders and other young wood still retained the quiet green of summer, and here and there a poplar shot up in all the brightness of perennial youth and vigour. Below coursed the rivulet, just heard brawling in the distance, until the stream fell with a dull heavy sound over the waterfall into the river. Along the terrace itself, and over the flower-beds of the garden beneath it, the beams of the sun sloped with a warm, broad light, bringing out into distinct relief the quiet gold and purple hues of the dahlias and other autumn flowers, and softening into dignity the harsh, exaggerated features and capricious forms of the grim old statues mouldering on the balustrade, or reclining round

the basin from whence the little fountain sent into the air a thin column of spray, scarce seen to return to its source, so quietly did it keep its poise in the surrounding stillness. The old red brick wall on the south side of the house was completely matted with luxuriant fruit-trees, and a large vine that clambered over the decayed battlement hung across it loaded with purple clusters which, half-hidden as they were beneath the leaves of the other wall-fruit, reminded me of a beautiful description in Spenser's Legend of Guyon, which I had been marking that morning for the perusal of the Lady Venetia.

Observing that Lord Budesdale did not notice my intrusion, I loitered on the terrace enjoying the prospect, and inwardly touched with the appearance of the now venerable figure before me; for as the Earl recovered from the immediate effects of his illness, the permanent ravages it had wrought on his frame became more open to obser-

vation. Yet, although he was almost deathly pale, and in appearance much older—indeed, ten years or more—than when I first introduced myself to him at Budesdale House, I was more impressed than ever with the classical dignity of his features, in which any little harshness before stamped upon them was now softened and toned down into the fine delicate lines of advanced, but venerable, age.

I loitered too long, for Lord Budesdale turned his head round whilst I was looking full at him; but instead of appearing displeased, he motioned me to his side, and requested me, with great friendliness of manner, to take my seat in the vacant chair. He observed, no doubt, that I had intruded upon his solitude by the merest accident, and, perhaps, having grown weary of sitting alone, was glad to enter into conversation with me. His voice, which, like that of his daughter, was at all times low in its tone, was now slightly tremulous, and when

he first spoke, his mind betrayed some of the enfeeblement of a long illness; for he wandered a little as he uttered a few usual words of ceremony, calling, if I recollect rightly, my attention to the beauty of the afternoon. As his eye scanned the prospect, he recurred with the usual fondness of old age to the scenes of his boyhood, and related to me several stories of pleasant days passed in the woods with friends long gone the last journey before him. He called my attention to the elegant proportions of the Prospect Tower, and related to me the legendary history of the lady of his family, whose death on that spot it had been raised to commemorate. Other family stories followed, and as I had already, from my walks in the gallery and researches in the old county histories in the library, become acquainted with the biography of the Earl's ancestors, I was enabled to recall several circumstances to his recollection which did not at the instant occur to him. I

had no intention of acting the courtier, but I soon discovered that I had attacked Lord Budesdale on one of his weak points—indeed he was so pleased with the interest I had taken in his family history, that he thought fit to compliment me upon it.

“I have really no occasion, Mr Elvington,” said Lord Budesdale, “to express to you my surprise at your familiarity with our genealogy, for I have already learned from my son Algernon that you are intimately acquainted with the history of your own country, a branch of education too much neglected in England. Since, however, we have touched on the topic, you must permit me to seize upon the favourable opportunity of thanking you for the benefit Mr Markham has derived from your conversations together, and to express my hope that when you adopt a profession, you will make choice of one congenial to your abilities and acquirements. I am aware,” added he, with a quiet

smile, "that you hold just at present the new-fangled doctrines which are gradually sapping our constitution both in church and state; but I have seen in the course of a prolonged life so many parliamentary patriots start up frantic Jacobins and die good old Tories after all, that I never despair of the conscientious conversion of a candid thinker. I was a very young man when Mr Pitt, Mr Dundas, and Lord Camden, came over to our side, and they were soon afterwards followed by Mr Burke, Mr Wyndham, and the rest of the Portland Whigs. In time, also, we made what we considered the great acquisition of Mr Canning; but to our sorrow," added he emphatically, "to our sorrow. However, I trust that as increasing years, and I regret to add, a deeper distrust of human nature, bring with them profounder knowledge, you will gradually adopt the good old principles, and, after you have done so, make politics your profession.

“ I am not,” added the Earl, “ one of those leaders of our party who are desirous that this great country should be governed by men of mere mediocrity of genius, or worse, none at all; nor indeed do I think it possible for the business of the state to be carried on by so many secretaries. Many a quarrel have I had in my day with old Lord Eldon on this very subject; and, to confess the truth, we bore each other no goodwill, although we always acted together in the House. Scott, as you are aware, was the son of a tradesman, and had the narrow mind of the class from which he sprung. Had we allowed the great Chancellor to have had entirely his own way, he would have governed this country by means of his own bagbearer and registrars, and kept every man of genius and eloquence on the back benches, just as he did Scarlett and the rest of the rising bar. This was not our Tory fashion, Mr Elvington, in the days of the Harleys and Bolingbrokes, and

was the most fatal mistake our party committed in the days of the Regency. Well, Eldon is gone, and, with all his faults, we miss him : he did not want courage, and stood in the breach when the rest of the peers, with Wellington at their head, capitulated. The full tide of radicalism has now set in upon us, and we have no one left to stem it except Peel, and him I most profoundly distrust. The day may come when he will reveal himself in his true colours as a more mischievous innovator even than Mr Canning—the man whom, people say, I think uncharitably, he sent to his grave ; but, thank Heaven, that day I shall not live myself to see.”

I have never been at any time of my life impenetrable to a little delicate flattery, especially when flowing from the lips of such a stately almost historical person as Lord Budesdale. His conversation also interested me ; for although I had understood that he spoke in the Peers both with

weight and precision, I was not prepared to discover any largeness in his views or liberality in his opinions, and thought that he deserved some credit for them. I replied, then, that I belonged from conscientious motives to the reforming party, but that his conversation convinced me that all candid thinkers had points of agreement in their opinions which they little suspected; and jestingly remarked, that we should not quarrel about Lord Eldon. I remarked that our old aristocracy had done their country good service in their day, and would go down the stream of history in company with the Claudii, the Cornelian Gens, the Medici, and other noble families of world-wide renown. In my judgment I added, and I had not formed it from mere prejudice but from a kind of historical induction, the time had now all but arrived when the English aristocracy should forego their extensive political privileges of which they had hitherto been trustees for the people—on the

whole, pretty faithful ones ; but this was no reason why men of good birth should ever cease to take their part in the government of a great country. I concluded by modestly reminding Lord Budesdale that, as far as my own abilities enabled me to do so, I had been preparing Mr Markham for a useful career in the Commons, instead of getting him into a good state, as it is called, for the wranglers at Cambridge.

Now all this civility was charitably meant, but every word of it, somehow or other, appeared to touch a sore point in Lord Budesdale's feelings. He gave me no immediate answer, but fell into a kind of reverie, continuing for some time absorbed in deep thought. At last he roused himself from what was apparently a painful dream, and addressed me in a grieved tone of voice, although very mildly. His manner, which was at all times impressive, although rather artificial, was now touching.

“Mr Elvington,” he said, “you have more years to live than I have, and may at last come to the opinion that you have lived too long; for you may see a melancholy spectacle enacted before your eyes, and may perhaps go through some vicissitudes of fortune. Something is about to pass over Europe resembling the fall of the Roman Empire, and will be succeeded by a period of terrible confusion. Wars will come first; rebellions in the vanquished and dislocated nations succeed to them; the tide of insurrection will travel on and overflow their conquerors. Whose inheritance will be submerged, and what ancient families may raise their heads above the deluge, no human foresight can divine.

“I have just been dwelling on the prospect before me. It was the inheritance of my ancestors many years before the Conquest, and has descended to me. I have been reflecting, Mr Elvington, that although it now appears so bright and sunny, it

will soon be buried in the snows of a dreary winter. After the winter the fields and forests will revive ; but I wish that I could persuade myself that my own class, the territorial baronage of this country, will ever flourish again as it has done, if it is once shorn of its honours and dignities. We are the lords—yes, I assert it emphatically, the inalienable lords of the soil, and the natural masters and protectors of the population upon its surface. If you ask me what reasons I have for asserting this apparent paradox, my reply is, that it is manifestly the will of Providence that the multitudes spread over the surface of the earth should be no mere horde of nomades, but neighbourhoods gathered together into convenient masses under the headship of hereditary leaders ; such leaders, of course, governing them not according to the dictates of their own selfish interests, but for the good of the whole. This arrangement wrongs no man ; for the peasant who has to toil for his

daily bread, and his master the farmer whose whole time is consumed in a combat with the soil and the seasons, are both, from the very humility of their position and narrowness of their mental horizon, disqualified from consulting their own permanent political interests. In my view of the case, then, this is our relative and well ascertained position. We are to govern and direct our tenantry—govern, not wring them, or tyrannize over them—and they, as a just and equivalent return, must yield up to their landlords every iota of political power. Checks and balances, and matters of that kind, I have heard of from my youth; Blackstone wrote something about them, and Mr Burke believed they were the essence of what he called the Constitution. They are the mere weapons of two divisions of our own body, the baronage, and enable them to keep the crown at their head merely, instead of allowing it to become their master. In constitutionalism, as anything

actually existing, I am no more a believer than the great Emperor Nicholas is.

“ Well, Mr Elvington, this is my old-fashioned view of the privileges and office of a baronage in the commonwealth. We ought to have kept them inviolate ; but what has our position been since the days of our fatal compact with Mr Pitt ? We allowed him to cheat us, or rather have cheated ourselves, out of our natural position, and have admitted mere vulgar wealth into our ranks. Our territorial status has sliden from beneath our feet, until at last, instead of boldly claiming the historical rights of the framers of Magna Charta, we crave—and that with bated breath, under the leadership of the son of a manufacturer—to retain them on the ground of expediency. This plea of expediency never yet afforded a firm footing to any dominant class in a nation, and never can support our own aristocracy. Privilege after privilege will be wrested from us, and at last it will

be found expedient to pension off the crown itself, and turn the empire into a republic. Of course, in a country like England, full of luxury and pampered wealth, and with no virgin territory at her back, a turbulent democracy will soon become intolerable, and you will then have a military despotism; or perhaps the nation will succumb to external conquest."

Lord Budesdale here paused, and I was unwilling to interrupt the current of his thoughts. At last he resumed and said proudly,

"Whatever may be the fate of my own line, they cannot take from it that portion of its inheritance in the land which is written on the very face of the hills, and rooted in the homesteads of the people. They may wrest our domains from us, cut down our woods, drive a railway through the park, and sell the mansion seated on it to the first manufacturer who will pay its value in mere thousands of pounds; but I do not imagine that it

will be worth their while to pull down the old keep at the foot of the village, and the inhabitants of that village will still call it Chartley-Markham many hundred years after the ashes of their old benefactors have ceased to repose in the monument they have erected in order that they may slumber in the midst of them."

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT I listened to Lord Budesdale's enunciation of the benefits and blessings of a territorial aristocracy with respectful attention, the reader has had evidence in the last chapter; but I was not at all likely to become a convert to the doctrine; having been the victim of the very system he lauded, and that owing to the misconduct of one of these same lords of the soil. My poor uncle, after having obtained the management of my unlucky fortune, had allowed it to melt away under his fingers, whilst the territorial possessions of the defrauder, which ought to have be-

come answerable to his nearest relation for this terrible breach of confidence, had gone over free and unencumbered to a distant branch of the same territorial family. The victim of a Chancery suit might as well extol the quibbles and niceties which had frittered his estate to a mere shred, as Sir William's nephew fall in love with the system which had beggared him.

But when Lord Budesdale—probably out of a mere desire to pay his son's tutor a handsome compliment—had alluded to the studies towards which my mind was naturally biassed, Politics, and foretold that I should rise as a statesman, he had touched a spring of ambition deeply rooted in my nature, although choked up by a tangle of contradictory qualities. It had been my misfortune, in early life, to sink into a mere quiet student, averse to any active career; but, like the generality of such men, I had had my day-dreams nevertheless, and these were for the most part tinged with a hue of

aspiration. For days together I had allowed to swim before my eyes unsubstantial visions of gratified ambition. I had harangued imaginary senates, brought forward schemes of reform, judicious although trenchant, and had carried them through the House amidst the cheers of supporters, and an encouraging rather than deterring tempest of opposition.

On becoming suddenly reduced to poverty, I cast these and other chimeras to the winds, feeling that I must have done with them for ever: that a person who had never taken the slightest advantage of his wealth and worldly position to soar into the region of secretaryships, could never fight his way there now, after he had lost the keys to the outer portal. Indeed, in the course of time, and aided by conflict with the actual necessities of life, I had quite weaned myself from the pernicious habit of indulging in these and similar reveries; and had not this unlucky com-

pliment, paid to me by Lord Budesdale, again struck upon that vein of ambition, might never have been molested by their solicitings again. Another train of meditation also—although taking a different direction, and relating to a far different object of aspiration—roused the slumbering fire in my bosom, and caused it to burn fiercely.

It had become impossible for me any longer to blind myself to the change wrought in my own thoughts by a certain alteration in the demeanour of the Lady Venetia. The rawest youth just set free from his school or private tutor, could not have failed to observe it, or refrain from speculating on the nature of its cause. Her usual manner was cold, still; but she no longer avoided my society as she formerly did—indeed, unless I flattered myself egregiously, she sought it. At times she held herself aloof for several days, apparently keeping a restraint upon her feelings; or, if we encountered each other, would reassume her

old hateful superciliousness of carriage; but would in spite of it become so absorbed and absent that even Algernon once or twice rallied her on the mistaken answers she gave to him. She would at all times studiously avoid being left alone in my society, and quit the terrace or flower-garden if she beheld me bending my steps in that direction. I noticed also that she walked alone much more frequently than had been her wont, and on some occasions, when I watched her, she appeared buried in deep and uneasy meditation. In the midst of these solitary musings, she might often be seen to rouse herself and hurry into the Earl's apartments, as if angry with her own weakness, and unwilling to trust the suggestions of a bosom ready to betray its mistress any longer.

What was the state of the case, then? Did the proud and lofty Lady Venetia, the daughter of a line of earls, hide in the recesses of a heart—a human one after all—a painful secret? Had she

become the victim of a passion which will not quite spare our cold and frosted buds of a tree of ancestry, although the chilly skies in which they wax fairest and flourish most luxuriantly nips the natural affections by one blast of its icy breath? Was I myself, on the other hand, the prey to a miserable delusion? I was not a mere rusty scholar after all. I had won hearts in my day, and might have claimed hands—ay, among them that of a Peeress too—but in those times I let all matters of that kind pass. Was the supposition of my again succeeding—despite the austerity, call it if you will ill-temper, in which I had shrouded myself since my ruin—so utterly absurd in my own view, as perhaps the reader would inform me it appears in his?

And did not this suggestion, perhaps of vanity, account for much in her conduct towards me at first? Was not her supercilious carriage after all the revenge taken by a haughty beauty on

the transgressor who had presumed to disturb her quiet? Granting this supposition, had she not strangled this emotion in its birth, and was not her present courteousness the result of the self-satisfaction of a proud self-reliant temper, which, having conquered what little weakness it had suffered from, felt armed at all points? Lastly, was not a violent struggle still raging round her heart, and was she not endeavouring to avoid a capitulation or to beat back a storm? One conclusion was certain: the Lady Venetia was changed in manner—in temper—most certainly in appearance. Her eye told its tale, and her wan blanched cheek; and I was not misled by mere vanity, when I only confined myself to the inquiry as to what might be the cause of it.

In the end I became, as people usually do, the victim of my own infatuation. One may be wise and courageous above his rivals, have a quick eye and nervous grasp, and so master them in every

contest; but if he presumes to wrestle with his ownself, he is pretty sure to get a grievous fall when he least expects it. In the present case, the unlucky compliment paid to me by Lord Budesdale came in to complete my ruin—indeed, gave me over to the enemy. I told myself that the Earl was not the person to flatter any man, and that he had spoken his sincere conviction only when he asserted that I possessed the talents required in a successful political career. The natural bent of my mind had been confirmed by a liberal education, and I had been busy reading Thucydides and Demosthenes, whilst my comrades were enjoying themselves in the society of the right-angled triangle. After quitting College, I had ranged through the fertile although desultory political and historical treasures of my own country, and had cultivated the faculties required in a ready debater: even my rather discreditable apprenticeship to the British Lion had taught

me to bend my energies to an appointed task, however repugnant to my taste. Here then was a person well fitted to succeed in the career to which nature had appointed him, and all he required was to be lifted over the first steps to it.

It is true that I was not more enamoured of compulsory exertion of any kind than Mr Markham himself, and, lacking a motive to compel myself to do my abilities justice, would have willingly rotted an idle weed on Lethe's wharf all my days. But this motive I had found in my love for the Lady Venetia—for I could not longer shut my eyes to the persuasion that this beautiful woman had brought me to her feet. I had been in love before, or imagined myself so; but the fancy had been transitory after all, since I had always preserved what I considered the valuable privilege of drawing back; but here I felt dragged in the chains of an imperious fair one, and hurried whither she thought fit. There was no softness in

the passion—it was a fierce and mastering one; yet I revelled in the tumult of the elements which contended within me, and felt my soul expanded as it strove in the conflict. She had gained the upper hand of me. I was her slave rather than lover—yet on one point I would have my own way. She had originally treated me with contempt, as a person of inferior station to her own, and I would not in return spare her any part of the painful struggle with her own haughty feelings. I would still enact the man of humble origin—the mere casual tutor of Mr Markham. The imperious woman, once won, I would reveal to her my original position in life, and satisfy her pride by acquainting her with the fact that I also was of an ancient lineage. But I would do so as her husband, not her lover. On this point my mind was quite made up.

An explanation once come to, I was foolish enough to flatter myself that I should not ex-

perience much difficulty in any future arrangements. I thought that, with a nobleman of Lord Budesdale's reputed wealth, mere want of fortune in her husband would not be a permanent hindrance to the settlement of his favourite child. I suspected shrewdly also, that the Lady Venetia had passed the age when a coronet is won and carried off before the fair girl's first season. At a certain stage of her existence, a great lady, unless she can contemplate with serenity the fate of dying in the palatial almshouse of Hampton Court, lowers her views just as her inferiors do. Lady Venetia was too proud a woman to carry on a hopeless contest against younger and fresher rivals for a mere splendid settlement; but she might still marry a husband whose ultimate elevation to the peerage might be the reward of his political services. Young Markham would never acquit himself in the Commons with the ability he really possessed; and since the Budesdales were too haughty a

race to tolerate even a respectable failure, the family-seat for the borough of that name would go begging. Here then was the opportunity—the golden fruit hung temptingly on the bough, and love and ambition could both be at once gratified by the mere plucking it.

I am willing to confess that I had hitherto entertained opinions which are considered the characteristic of a philosophical radical, and had honestly despised the peerage, into the ranks of which I now aspired to force my way, and should, in my cooler moments, no doubt have adhered to my political faith at any cost. But at that time my passion for the Lady Venetia perfectly infatuated me, and caused me to regard the renunciation of my own private opinions as a laudable kind of self-immolation, undergone for the sake of winning her coveted hand.

4

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE, frequently a benevolent autocrat, becomes a harsh and severe minister and capricious servant. Give everything into his hands, allow him to rule and govern at his pleasure, and he will, in all probability, crown your aspirations with a success beyond your fondest dreams. But baulk his exertions by your reserve, thwart his benevolent intentions by lukewarmness, and you will soon find that he will do nothing to serve you—indeed, you are lucky if he does not take a morbid delight in entangling you in a net of cross purposes. Now, two such tempers as my own and that of the Lady

Venetia were not likely to avail ourselves of the best of opportunities, even if presented to us ready at hand by him who had apparently rendered himself the master of our destiny. It was not, therefore, very probable that we should on any occasion seek an opportunity of our own accord, or endeavour to create one. On one unsought occasion certainly the lady apparently gave me a slight hint that she did not altogether discourage my dreams of mingled love and ambition—whichever complexion they assumed.

Lady Venetia Markham had a real love and taste for literature, and had even in her younger days published a volume of Poems—of course for private distribution only. It was no great wonder therefore that her brother Algernon's utter ignorance on all topics of elegant study and refined pursuit annoyed her beyond measure. During the latter part of my stay at Chartley she spoke to me con-

fidentially on the subject, observing that in these times it was all but necessary for a young man in Algernon's position in society to affect a literary taste, although he did not perhaps possess an acquired one. I could not resist a secret smile at this strange view of the pretensions of Milton and Spenser, taken by a lady who was a leading member of the great governing class, merely ranking our poets and novelists as something supplying the place of the China mandarins and Indian screens of their great grandmothers; but the remark was characteristic of the Markhams.

However, as Algernon had by this time grown disgusted beyond measure with Socrates and Æneas, and would reduce no more Surds, he was ready to submit to any amount of tutorial oppression, provided it did not assume the shape of the old engine of torture. I proposed, then, to the Lady Venetia to vary her brother's studies, and

employ the few weeks remaining to us by taking him through some of the best-known scenes of Shakspeare. Lady Venetia assented to the suggestion, and as Algernon jumped at it, we took down a play off the shelves, reading an act every morning, and making any remarks which occurred to us. His sister, who, as I before stated, had a real taste for poetry, frequently came into the study whilst we were reading, and took part in our little discussions. Mr Markham had not only a strong memory, but would be pertinacious at times; so a certain amount of the morning's reading remained in his head, and he would frequently astonish me by an apt quotation.

One morning the Lady Venetia requested me to open *Romeo and Juliet* and run through the first two acts, saying that she had been just reading Schlegel's Critique, and although she admired the eloquence of the language and beauty of the illustrations, she could not altogether submit her

judgment to his, or to any of the popular theories of its poetical development. I immediately assented to this rather flattering request, and ran through the acts, reading aloud the passages to which she more especially called my attention. When a point of discussion was started, or a difference of opinion revealed itself, we referred to the critic whose work Lady Venetia held in her hand, in Mr Black's translation, if I recollect rightly. After we had read the play in this cursory manner, she thanked me with her usual grace, observing that she was rather shaken in her own opinion, and should be careful of differing from any Shaksperian critic—Schlegel, Coleridge, Jameson, or even Hazlitt, for the future.

Lady Venetia well observed, that a man of genius when he was even reading Shakspeare—much more if analyzing his finest passages—appeared as it were to grow beyond his own stature, and to be for a while admitted within recesses where dwelt the

great spirit (like the godhead in Southey's *Kehama*, which she had been just reading) in pure uncreated light. She said that so far from violently seizing us and endeavouring to carry one at once and by force to the height of his own inspiration, as Milton and most other great poets did, Shakspeare seemed to allure us to merely walk forth with him ; but before we had gone far we discovered ourselves in a perfect paradise of beauty and loveliness, from which we reluctantly returned to our everyday world.

Lady Venetia proceeded to say that she would endeavour to illustrate her remarks, as to the faculty possessed by our great poet of inspiring the genius of his critics, by reading two passages of great beauty—one from Schlegel, and the other from Mrs Jameson, whose work also she had brought with her from the library. She then read the well-known passage in Schlegel, commencing with “ whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a

southern spring," and which runs on for about twelve lines in a strain of most exquisite rhythm and glowing fancy—indeed a perfect little gem of lyrical prose. She next opened the volume beside her on the table, and read, in her low quiet voice, but with the earnest eye and enwrapt countenance of a Sibyl, the following little dirge—more exquisite, in my opinion, than a hundred lines of any formal threnos in the *Poetæ Scenici*, upon that poor plaything of a stormy destiny, Ophelia.

“Once at Murano I saw a dove caught in a tempest; perhaps it was young, and either lacked strength to reach home or the instinct which teaches to shun the brooding storm, but so it was—and I watched it pitying, as it flitted, poor bird, hither and thither, with its silver pinions shining against the black thunder-cloud, till, after a few giddy whirls, it fell blinded, affrighted, and bewildered into the wave beneath, and was swal-

lowed up for ever. It reminded me then of the fate of Ophelia."

When we had recovered a little from our admiration of the beauty of this exquisite illustration, the Lady Venetia, who had noticed that by this time Algernon had thrown himself back in his chair with his eyes shut and yawning most fearfully, addressed her conversation to me solely. She remarked that the different criticisms on this beautiful dramatic poem had given rise to a theory in which she could not altogether acquiesce. She said, rather playfully, that it was a presumptuous thing for a lady to have any opinion at all, especially upon a theory, poetical or otherwise; but still, that she always endeavoured to form ^{her} her own judgment on every topic which came before her, and was then ready, although not one of the stronger sex, to maintain it to the utmost of her ability. I smiled at this little trait of the firmness of the Markhams, as displayed in a daughter of

their race ; but as the lady was quite right and I was anxious to hear her express her opinion on a love-story, I entreated her to give me the benefit of it.

Lady Venetia's studies after all had not gone deeper than those of a clever woman frequently do, for I discovered by her discourse that she had been reading an essay in some recent volume of periodical literature, and had there found it asserted with reference to this play, that the passion of love revealed itself by "utterance," as the writer termed it. Now, she observed that this theory was a partial one at the best, and that the remark was only applicable to a Romeo and Juliet,^{*} two lovers in the spring-time of their youth. She said that a treatise on the Passions did not come much within a lady's scope ; but still, if she might be allowed to express her opinion, all the passions of the youthful breast revealed themselves by this "utterance," Love of course being among

them. Hate, she said, does so—Pride, and every other strong emotion. But people, she added, were very much mistaken when they imagined that the first outbreak of love, or any other passion in fact, was its last. The blossom might fall, but with its leaves it shed its seed, and it lurked nestling in the breast, only awaiting a mild and cherishing season to germinate. In the meantime, and after the first flush of youth, other feelings, many of them antagonistic, had been developing themselves during the slumber of the one mastering passion of early years, and when this passion again revived, it would have to force its way through a tangle of conflicting emotions. Prudential motives, a strong regard for the opinion of those about us, and many other prejudices which we all affected to despise, would then exercise great sway, curbing the heart and fancy, so that any turbulent passion—say, as a mere matter of critical remark, love in the bosom

of a Juliet grown older—would have to encounter strong mental opposition. The result of the contest would in most cases depend upon the sufferer's strength of mind. Some, suppose them women, allowably yielded to their womanly weakness, became mere Juliets (as she scornfully termed them), and had better sleep in Verona among the Montagues and Scaligers, than wake up to the reality of a lost station and undeluded reason; especially if it was their lot to live in the cold, chilly climate of England. Others felt themselves from the first unequal to the revived struggle within their breasts, and fled, taking sanctuary, as was frequently the case in Italy, in a nunnery, whilst others again had the strength of mind to strangle their weakness in its birth, and were free once more—at some cost, she was ready to admit. At all events, the first stage was a silent, mental struggle, which, so far from revealing itself by the “utterance,” as the writer had termed

it, of a girlish Juliet, imposed muteness on the tongue, taught the eye to counterfeit disdain, and threw a mask over the features—a mask which the eye must be skilful indeed that detected the emotion beneath.

She spoke in this manner for some time, apparently forgetting that she was not alone in her own chamber; but all of a sudden recollecting herself, she immediately came to a pause—bit her lip slightly, and appeared so vexed with herself that tears almost started to her eyes. At last having mastered her emotion, she turned it off by a playful jest with Algernon, regretting that Schlegel and Mrs Jameson had sent the young man to sleep.

When the Lady Venetia quitted the room, I also woke up from a kind of trance, and gave Mr Markham an equation to solve, in order to hide my confusion at the moment; but before he brought out the answer, proposed a stroll in

the park, where somehow or other I managed to get rid of him, and then pondered over the singular conversation I had just had with his sister.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILST I continued living thus in a delicious revival of my old day-dreams—of which, I am sorry to confess, the pretty Fanny Gently formed no portion—time was gliding from under my feet, and yet I had not the courage to seek or make an opportunity of coming to an explanation with the Lady Venetia. I was sought out one morning by the formal old steward, who delivered to me his Lordship's compliments, and a request that I would go round to the Earl's private apartments. I am ashamed to let the reader into the secret of my weakness, but my heart beat quickly as I fol-

lowed the servant through the great gallery, and complacently glanced at portraits of great ones with whom I might possibly claim relationship. Of course, I had not the slightest reason to delude myself after this fashion, and when closeted with Lord Budesdale, found that he wished to exchange a few words with me on a subject totally different from that my vanity whispered. He received me with the greatest kindness and courtesy; but a shade of vexation dwelt on his countenance, and as he spoke his temper appeared rather ruffled.

“Mr Elvington,” said Lord Budesdale, after I had seated myself, “I have by the merest accident made a discovery which has caused me some slight annoyance; I have ascertained that you are the grandson of a gentleman by whom I was, when a young man on my travels, received in his own palace, and persuaded to stay many pleasant weeks there. I allude to the deceased Sir William Maurice, formerly our ambassador at Florence.

You may guess my vexation when I ascertained that I was entertaining the grandson of a gentleman of this rank as the private tutor of Mr Markham. All the reparation it is now in my power to make to you is to request you to pardon an error for which I am not after all accountable.

This lordly speech of the Earl not only dashed all my visionary hopes to the ground in a moment, but positively grated on my ear, for the very punctiliousness of the apology revealed to me the not very flattering view taken by him of my position in his family. I therefore answered Lord Budesdale briefly, that his information was perfectly correct, and assured him that nothing connected with my visits to Budesdale House, or reception at Chartley, caused me to entertain any feelings towards himself and his family except those of respect and esteem. Lord Budesdale appeared gratified with my reply, and continued as follows.

“ I can perfectly appreciate the motives, Mr Elvington, which prompted you after accepting my offer to conceal from me your descent from one of our oldest Norman families in the kingdom ; for the Maurices are, as you are aware, on the Roll of Battle Abbey. I may go further and add, that I am gratified to the utmost degree by the delicacy of feeling which suggested to you the expediency of inflicting no wound, however slight, on the pride of the present head of the family, Sir Anthony Maurice ; indeed, your conduct displays the beneficial influence of good birth and ancestry under very peculiar circumstances. However, by the course you have pursued,” said the Earl in a cold tone of voice, “ you have placed me in a position which compels me to apologize to you for the mistake I have made, and to request that, for the remainder of your stay here, you will consider yourself as my guest. After Algernon leaves for Cambridge, I trust that you will prolong your

visit, if only for a few weeks, in order to satisfy me that I have returned the hospitality of your excellent grandfather to one of his descendants.

It was not possible for me to accept an invitation thus extorted from a very proud nobleman, I therefore assured Lord Budesdale that my private affairs compelled me to return to London as soon as convenient to him. As I pertinaciously insisted on the point, he gave way, and indeed did not appear much displeased, for he answered with all his usual blandness,

“Well then, Mr Elvington, you must accept an invitation for some future occasion. The time has not yet come, I think, when we shall cease to receive our friends and guests either in London or at Chartley. In the meantime, you may rest assured that your secret is safe with me, and that the circumstance of your filling your present position in my family shall never reach the ears of Sir Anthony. I have my own secrets,” added he, as

a strange expression came over his countenance, "and you may therefore accept my assurance that I will keep yours sacred."

An embarrassing pause here ensued ; for I was vexed beyond measure at these perpetual allusions to the feelings of Sir Anthony Maurice, as something of so much importance, while mine appeared to be altogether lost sight of in comparison with them. I did not think fit then to make any answer to his lordship, and he was compelled, in order to break the silence, to renew the conversation himself.

"You will, I am sure, Mr Elvington," said Lord Budesdale, "excuse the question of a man much the elder of the two, and one who looks upon himself from this day forward as your personal friend. The Sir William Maurice with whom I was acquainted died during the minority of his son and daughter. Did the daughter marry with the consent of her brother, Mr Elvington ?

He was the head of the family, and had a right to be consulted, of course."

"Certainly, Lord Budesdale," I answered, with some firmness. "My father was the college companion of my poor uncle, and married his sister, who had little or no fortune, with his approbation. I am sorry to acquaint you," I added, not being in my heart unwilling to disclose to the Earl something to the disadvantage of his territorial baronage, "that I am the victim of the carelessness of my uncle; whose memory I nevertheless am desirous of treating with respect. The late Sir William died in embarrassed circumstances, and has so involved my own property with his that it cannot at present be extricated from the confusion in which he has left everything. With the unpleasant result to his nephew your lordship is sufficiently acquainted."

"Good heavens, Mr Elvington!" exclaimed Lord Budesdale, for the first time since I had

known him breaking through the artificial calmness of his demeanour, and exerting more energy of speech and gesture than I had imagined his feebleness would have allowed him to display, "you do not mean to tell me that Sir William Maurice has ruined his own family! All lines of ancient descent," added he, while the same strange expression returned to his countenance, "have their criminals, but the greatest of all is the man who, by alienating the family estates, cuts off the whole volume of the current of honour and dignity from those who come after him. For such a criminal there is no forgiveness in this world, even in the view he takes himself of his misconduct; although in another state of being all our arrangements here are looked upon, I doubt not, as matters of no great importance."

"My uncle," I replied, bitterly, "has most assuredly ruined his nephew; but if you allude to the family estates, I can relieve your lordship by

the information that they were fortunately out of his reach. Had this not been the case, I could not have answered that many acres would have passed over to the present baronet. Sir William was naturally a man of high and honourable spirit, but was much too careless to have any consideration for those who came after him, however near their relationship might be. However, the family estates being entailed, descended to the present Sir Anthony, together with the baronetcy, and I am the only sufferer through my guardian's misconduct."

"Have you ever," inquired Lord Budesdale in an anxious tone, "urged upon the present baronet the hardship of your case, and requested him and his son (who is of age, I know) to charge the estates in your favour?"

"Never, my lord," I replied. "I know Sir Anthony's character too well even to dream that such an application would have the slightest

chance of success. I have forbidden my solicitor to enter into any correspondence with him on the subject of my loss."

"And your conduct is highly honourable," exclaimed Lord Budesdale, taking no notice of the bad character I gave Sir Anthony: who, I am sorry to say, did not deserve a better one. "And so," he concluded, in a musing voice, as if thinking aloud, "the personal misconduct of Sir William has, after all, been of no detriment to the line of which he was the representative. The family estates have, owing to the beautiful arrangements of our laws restraining the alienation of freehold property, passed to the next heir—old traditions are preserved unbroken—old tenants are not turned adrift—ancestral trees not felled—and the family politics, I do not ask whether they be Whig or Tory, assert themselves with unchanging consistency in the face of a growing and insolent democratic clamour. I beg your pardon, Mr Elvington," said the

Earl, waking up, "but I am not a younger man than I was, and my mind still feels the effect of my recent indisposition. Considering that you have hitherto taken Algernon under your charge, would it be too much if I were to request you to desire him to step this way? Now I have my mind turned to the subject, I may as well make a few arrangements with him preparatory to his entrance into the great world, for so he thinks it, of a university."

This civil little command, couched in the form of a request, closed our interview, as of course Lord Budesdale intended it should do. For the rest of the morning I was permitted to continue the companion of my own thoughts, which certainly did not leave me a greater convert to the doctrine of the blessings of a territorial baronage than they found me.

CHAPTER XVII.

WERE the reader to ask me seriously whether the result of this interview with Lord Budesdale was perfectly satisfactory to my feelings or not, I should scarce know how to answer him. There was much in the lofty distance of the old Earl's manner, and the new illustration he had given me of his notions of family importance, which was by no means encouraging to the aspirant to an alliance with his daughter. At the same time it was evident that I had made as much advance in his good graces by the mere accident of his discovering me to be a cadet of the ancient family

of Maurice, as if I had suddenly blazed out as a person of extraordinary virtue and abilities. As for his allusion to the Roll of Battle Abbey, I was almost weak enough to dream of it at night. At last, by the usual mental alchymy, my imagination only retained the pleasant part of the banquet set before it, and utterly rejected the remainder.

It must be borne in mind also, that I had by this time become deeply enamoured of the beautiful woman with whom I had now been domesticated for so many weeks—indeed perfectly infatuated with love for her. Let it be added, that there was no change, or none visible to my sight, in her carriage towards me, that gave any indication of a relapse to her former coldness, and my delusion may appear somewhat more excusable.

However, day glided away after day, without affording us any opportunity of coming to an explanation : at last I almost yielded to despair, and was once or twice on the point of opening my

eyes to the true state of the case. But the very morning before that on which I was to take my departure from Chartley, my lucky star appeared to beam upon me, and the long-looked for opportunity presented itself.

I was in our little study with Algernon, and the Lady Venetia, who was evidently sorry to part with her favourite brother, came into the room; but she had scarcely seated herself when Lord Budesdale sent round a request to see Mr Markham in his own apartments. These interviews between the father and son were stately affairs, and seldom took more than a quarter of an hour. The Earl just asked Algernon a question or two—expressed his own wishes—paused to receive the assurance of his son's compliance with them—and finally gave him his dismissal. My pupil, then, on receiving the summons, jumped up from his chair, saying that he should be back in a few minutes, and requested his sister to wait in the study until

his return. When he quitted the room, leaving us alone, we both sat for some few minutes in an awkward silence; but I saw the opportunity, and being desperate of ever obtaining another, determined to seize it. I therefore addressed myself to the Lady Venetia—at first with embarrassment, but gaining confidence as I went on.

I told her that it was impossible for me at least to conceal from myself any longer, that something in the bearing of each of us towards the other bore testimony to an emotion of a much deeper nature than mere friendship. The state of my own feelings I could not possibly mistake, and I appealed to her own heart whether any secret was harboured there. I observed, that the passion which had mastered my manhood caused me acute suffering while it afforded me delicious pleasure; but, honourable as they were, I saw no reason why I should suppress these emotions. Fortune had favoured us with but a few fleeting minutes, and

I entreated her to allow me to seize them, protesting that if she did so, I would come to an explanation that might cause her to look more favourably upon a suitor, who might not prove wholly undeserving of her regard. Finally, I conjured her to interrogate her own heart, and pause before she came to a decision which might embitter the days of both of us, and leave our lives a mere blank for the future—a future full of misery and hopeless regret.

In these, or passionate words to the same purport, did I address the beautiful woman seated before me, urging my suit with unwonted vehemence; for the very sight of her as I went on fired my tongue with ardour, and made my heart to pant with emotion. I was not, however, so totally blinded by love as to omit watching her features narrowly, and observed, or fancied that I observed, a violent conflict raging within her, which partially revealed itself in her face. Pride sat there, and

haughtiness mingled with shame, and then a gentleness beaming fitfully in her eye, like the sunbeams just glinting through a dark cloud; and when it retired, a frown of bitter scorn contracted her imperious brow. At all events, she was too much torn with passion, or emotion perhaps, to make me any reply; I therefore pressed my suit with redoubled vehemence, for I felt every moment was now precious.

I told her that I felt one of those prophetic warnings in my breast which haunt one when a career of some kind is opening before him; and I rejoiced at it, for it supplied a motive to spur me on to exertion. I avowed myself to be a gentleman by birth and education, and possessed of those honourable feelings which I trusted were the inheritance of my class. I did not, then, ask to be honoured with her hand, unless I undertook to prove myself deserving of the boon, and had won my bride in the listed field, as it were, of a noble

competition. All I hoped for was some slight recognition of my affection, and an assurance that if I toiled for the possession of a beloved object, my exertions would not be utterly thrown away.

I observed, that the genealogies of all our great families were crowded with instances of private gentlemen who, intermarrying with the nobility, had ultimately come to be regarded as worthy of no small portion of their renown. I appealed to the very portraits in the gallery of warriors and statesmen, who had been admitted, at first reluctantly perhaps, into her own line, and had afterwards made their names famous by land and sea, or in the senate. I instanced Fox and George Canning, and many others almost in our own day. I asked if the noble line which had adopted the latter as a near relative felt ashamed to claim kindred with the great statesman, or whether they did not consider that his reputation added another jewel to a ducal coronet. Lord Budesdale him-

self, I said, had advised me to adopt the political service of my country, and had foretold that I should rise to eminence in it. I would act upon his advice instantly, and make a desperate struggle upwards. All I entreated was her assurance that my passion was not wholly unrequited, before I rushed into a contest in which it depended upon her alone whether I succumbed a vanquished man, or deported myself so as to come off the victor.

Thus I went on, urging my appeal, whilst the Lady Venetia still remained silent. Methought I beheld the struggle still going on within her, and that the tender passions at first asserted the mastery. Her eyes, which assumed a gentler expression than they usually wore, were downcast on the ground, and if she suppressed a sigh, it was with difficulty. Gradually, however, this expression appeared to pass away and vanish from her face, and a tone of haughty indignation, and almost defiance, took its seat. Her

cheek, usually as cold as statuary marble, positively burned, and her magnificent eyes sparkled so fearfully that I averted my own from them. Still I thought that I had never before beheld her so perfectly beautiful. I worshipped the divinity which appeared about to burst from her in lightning-scorn, and annihilate the rash votarist who had mistaken a goddess for a mere mortal. After a violent effort, the passion which choked her found utterance, and I then learned what had been passing through her mind.

“Really, Mr Elvington,” said the Lady Venetia, “I have been endeavouring to consider of what indiscretion I have been guilty that could challenge this unmerited, this shameful insult—an insult which I never can and never will overlook—but I am utterly unable to discover any. Such conduct, sir, is unpardonable, and quite unworthy of a gentleman: which you pretend you are. Were there any equality of station between us, I assure you

that you should receive only one answer. My elder brother is abroad; but Algernon is not the idle careless youth you mistake him for, and would know how to protect his only sister from insult. But the very humiliation of receiving it is such that I am compelled to conceal it from others—yes, even from my own brother. Were even one of the servants to entertain the slightest suspicion of the infamous advantage you have taken of your hospitable reception under this roof, I should die of vexation. What rules of decorum have I broken? How have I been wanting in respect towards myself, or in my conduct to others, that I should become the object of your paltry dreams of self-aggrandizement?—yes, an item in the selfish calculations of the private tutor of my own brother. Has it come to this? Must I, at the moment when my father shows signs of declining health, and my two brothers are removed from my side, become the object of the persecution of a mere adventurer?

I shall, for the sake of my own self-respect, Mr Elvington, keep this humiliating scene a secret, buried in my own breast; but you shall assuredly pay the penalty of your insolence, and in a manner you little expect."

Must I confess the truth? my eyes were opened in a moment, and I saw at one glance the paltry appearance my conduct must assume in the estimation of any other person. I had deceived myself egregiously: but what of that? Yet, notwithstanding this, unless I had been all the time fitted to become the inmate of a lunatic asylum, I had been led on and encouraged by the very woman who now turned round and trampled me under her feet. I felt confounded and unable to utter a word. The Lady Venetia was likewise silent: she was determined not to shed tears, although they stood in her eyes. Gradually all signs of passion cleared off from her features like the clouds sailing away from the troubled Autumn

sky, leaving it cold and serene, and her countenance reassumed its wonted impassibility. She rose from her seat in a lofty manner—I was too much cowed and abashed to make any effort to detain her—and looking down upon me as something utterly beneath her notice, addressed me in a tone intended to convey the inference that she had been wrong in ever feeling angry with such a person.

“After all, sir,” said she, “I have allowed myself to be too much moved by this trifle, and if you deserved an apology for any remarks of mine which have hurt your feelings, you should receive one from me, as a matter of course. And, perhaps, you deserve more compassion than censure, and will, no doubt, be exceedingly vexed with yourself when you think the matter over quietly. However, let all this be a lesson to you for the future. Your position in this family has been a novel one, and, except in this instance, you

have conducted yourself in a manner which merits our esteem and commendation. We are all under an obligation to you for the benefit my brother has received from your instructions, and as you have to a certain extent won his goodwill, you may, after all, reap some advantage from your temporary connexion with the Budesdale family. Indeed, it might have been a source of pleasant recollection and permanent advantage to you from first to last, had it not been for this act of ridiculous presumption on your part. I do not know whether it is my duty to overlook it so entirely; for your scheme, although a flimsy one, might have been put into practice in some other family, and imposed upon a young inexperienced victim. You have a cultivated mind, possess some personal advantages, and are the master of talents fitted to make their way in a society more on your own level; you might have been domesticated in this house or some other with

some poor child totally ignorant of the world, and the silly inexperienced creature would have taken you at your own value: such things have occurred before, and will happen again, and she would perhaps have involved her destiny with yours by a hasty marriage. Now, in this case, how could you, when you had once ruined your victim for life, have regarded your own conduct? You would have been guilty, even in your own eyes, of a total violation of confidence—committed a shameful breach of hospitality—and rendered a poor confiding young creature miserable for the rest of her days—and all (for I will put the case in the mildest shape) for the gratification of your own vanity. I put it thus mildly, Mr Elvington, because I am desirous of parting with you for ever with as many charitable feelings as I can command. Henceforth we shall not be in much danger of encountering each other, but if we do meet, it will be, as a matter of course, as utter strangers.

As then I shall not have another opportunity of taking my leave of you before you quit Chartley, you will please to receive my best wishes for your future happiness and success in life—only let such success be the result of fair and honourable conduct. When you happen to marry in your own station, I may perhaps hear of the event, and shall be pleased with the news for your sake. Marry in your own station, Mr Elvington; for if you do not, you will only find matrimony a state of dependence and splendid misery after all.”

With these words the Lady Venetia slowly retired from the room, closing the door quietly after her. As she confined herself for the rest of the day and the whole of the next morning to her own private apartments, under the excuse of a slight illness, I had no opportunity of seeing her again before I quitted Chartley. Algernon parted from me with great cordiality and no small regret, for he had become attached to his tutor; and, now the

time had arrived for his plunge into the real world, had some dread of the change. The old Earl also appeared rather sorrowful in his manner as he shook me by the hand with a warmth unusual to him, and expressed his best wishes for my future welfare. He forgot, however, to repeat the invitation he had previously given me to Chartley, and I, on my part, made no allusion to the subject.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I RETURNED to London. The state of my mind can be conceived rather than expressed. My nature had been stirred to its inmost depths before this, and I had in my time felt the fierce surging and revolt of the passions. I had experienced what it is to have the whole of one's sensational part up in arms—anger hounding on to hatred, gnawing disgust urging one to loathe and fly, sympathy and love exercising their wondrous magnetism—attracting, leading on—in fact, the whole of the emotions roused to a violent struggle with each other. These gusts of passion are not

unhealthy, after all; like hurricanes and thunderstorms they clear the air whilst they perturb it, and after the moral tempest rides over, one feels subdued—in fact, refreshed.

But this was a secret hurt—my wound bled inwardly. That which men most cherish—self-love, complacency, honourable pride—all had received a stab. It was like the wound made by a rapier—clean, but deadly; not an honest downright cut with a sabre. There was no hiding the meaning of it from my own eyes. Until the misconduct of my uncle had not only deprived me of my mere wealth in so many thousands of pounds, but, far worse, had placed me in a worldly position wherein I became a riddle even to myself, I had possessed a hundred means and expedients to preserve my feelings from any violation that might threaten them. After the blow had been struck, and my altered circumstances compelled me to make one more in the great human crowd, and

take its rude thrusts in good part, some lucky accident—perhaps the cordiality and delicate kindness of the Gentlys—had prevented me from at once perceiving that, for the future, my feelings, such as they were, and what little self-love it still befitted me to nourish, would no longer be taken any great account of by the people about me. But a man who is far from rich, and cannot every day in the year unfold a rent-roll or produce his check-book in order to vindicate a position to which every lucky railway magnate is asserting his claim, soon learns the value set upon him in this good-natured island of ours; and my pretensions had been weighed and found wanting at last, by a scornful, supercilious woman.

As I stated before, my heart bled inwardly—I took a morbid delight in feeling and probing the laceration. Day after day and hour by hour did I sit in my own room, brooding over the treatment I had received—analyzing it—puzzling my brains

to account for it. Lady Venetia's conduct towards me—its mysterious commencement and crushing end, bore all the marks of pre-meditation on the face of the matter. But, if the result of a deliberate plan, why was one formed?

This was clear: I had been led on by the artifices of this woman, until she had entangled her victim in a labyrinth without outlet, and then abandoned him with words of mockery ringing in his ears. This woman, I said, has acted like other daughters of Eve—trifled with my affections, and then cast me away. But is this fact ascertained? Have I not, on the other hand, been from the very beginning the credulous victim of gross self-delusion. And if she has even, acting after all against what I believe to be the haughty sincerity of her temper, condescended to lay this cruel snare for my affections, what prompted her to a meanness foreign to her character. Had I wounded the arrogance which formed no small portion of the mingled

nature of that strange, reserved disposition? and had that bad passion, stooping to meannesses of which her sister pride will seldom be guilty, taken this miserable revenge upon the offender? Or had the loneliness of the life we led at Chartley at first favoured what I had the weakness at the time to consider as my pretensions, and had I really for a few weeks obtained a certain kind of mastery over the lady's affections, so that she suffered from a struggle between them and her own haughty self-sufficient temper?

If so, the result was pretty clear—all the Markhams, with the exception of Algernon, were known to be the prey of their own pride and self-sufficiency—indeed, half-mad with it; and the Lady Venetia, when her own was once fairly stung, would soon regain the mastery over herself by trampling her affections under foot. This victory won, she would of course meditate and achieve a full and signal revenge upon the person who had dared to excite

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such a self-reproachful tumult in her bosom, and at any cost to herself—to him—crush him to the earth.

A supposition less flattering even than these remained behind, and I could place it before myself in a very few words. The Lady Venetia and her class are the spoilt children of this country. We worship them like idols, until at last they come to the conclusion that their own freaks and weaknesses, their merest whims, are to be indulged at any cost to the feelings of the inferior creatures around them. Accident had separated this great lady for a short time from her usual sources of amusement—drawing-rooms, Italian vocalists, deferential men of genius, idle members of the nobility, and so on. The time hung heavily on her hands at Chartley, and she really must have some excitement to relieve the tedium of an involuntary and odious seclusion. She accidentally found a toy cast in her path—she stooped—took it up—trifled with it

—then broke it and cast it aside : that toy was a human heart.

Concerning the result of this unworthy treatment, the effect it took upon my own temper and character, there is unfortunately no doubt. It made a total wreck of the little respectability my original downfall in life had left in my possession. I have read in my time theories of human nature, and systems of morals, written by professors, masters of colleges, and people of that stamp, and am familiar with the common-places which illustrate the beauties and uses of adversity. When possessed of some worldly wealth and consideration, I ought to have been vicious and depraved according to their theory, and the moment these garish hindrances to virtue were stripped off my back, there was my moral nature with a clean skin to the outward air, braced, purified, and regenerated. But it is easy for a well-endowed man—I mean endowed with a fellowship or canonry—to sit in his easy

chair in the college quadrangle or cathedral close, and forget the feeling which is at the bottom of half the vice and wickedness of the world—recklessness. They know nothing of the feeling from their own experience—very seldom run their eye over the collocation of letters forming the syllables—never read the word, or ask themselves its meaning. And so the “Sermons on Moral Subjects,” or “Treatise on the Springs of Action” sell and reach a second edition.

Now, in my nature, as originally moulded, there was nothing like recklessness at all. Even when at school, I was a remarkably self-retinent and considerate boy, although not deficient in a certain kind of boldness. When resident at the University, I had plunged into none of the foolish, thoughtless follies which ruin the health and fortunes of the one-half of our Cantabs for the rest of their days. I had not rowed myself into a heart-complaint, like some famous and renowned stroke-

oar of the First or Second Trinity, nor squandered the income of the next ten years in the society of reckless young men, my juniors or seniors in standing by a year. After quitting Cambridge, I had dreamed away my existence, certainly, but had nevertheless always preserved my health, and managed my affairs with the ordinary prudence of a man who, although he is not ambitious to improve his income, yet considers it disgraceful to his prudence to allow it to fall off. But from the very afternoon that the worthy Mr Gently informed me, in a few considerate words, that my uncle had left me ruined, this caution and presence of mind spread its wings and took flight, and in its stead came a busy fiend, creeping up to my elbow and whispering in my ear that all the prudence in the world would now be of no avail: that I was doomed to poverty, and should never extricate myself from her clutches—that the lot of the poor man was a

miserable one, and relieved by very little relish or enjoyment of life. One solace remained; it seemed the only one: it was the cup of dissipated enjoyment. The best thing I could do would be to seize it and drain the bowl to the dregs before I allowed it to be torn from my hands.

To resume my sad history, then; taking up the story from the date of my return from Chartley. At first I did nothing—just lived on and felt crushed and humiliated. The tide of life rolled past me in the streets, painted as it were on the canvass of a moving diorama, and what occurred in my own rooms appeared a mere waking trance. I had apartments to seek—I took them, and entering the house like a person walking in his sleep, shut myself up within the four walls of the sitting-room. My prospect in worldly matters was a dismal one—my resources would not hold out for ever. I had only some seventy pounds left in the world; and I lived upon the money as long as

it lasted. One morning I discovered that my whole worldly stock of coin could be held in the palm of the hand, and that if I wished to eke it out, I must seek a meaner lodging. I sought it and found one, and then shut myself up again, leading the same life I had been leading before, and reading the same books—that is, until one by one the volumes disappeared. I parted with them without reluctance, rejoicing that I was not, as so many learned men are, the slaves of my own books, but could bring myself to sell them as contentedly as a Virginian traffics away his black footman with the dealer in Tennessee or Arkansas.

These books were, many of them, on rather abstruse subjects: they were the remains, in fact, of my old library; but although I pored over the leaves without ceasing, I cannot assert that when the volume was out of my hands, I recollected the subject of it, or pondered over the argument for five minutes. I could read the *Theætetus* or

Bestimmung des Menschen, and while doing so, take in their scope clearly, distinctly, and with a deliberate strain upon my attention; but there the matter ended. I had dreamed away one whole morning, or heard the clock of the parish-church in the next street strike midnight, every toll of the bell reminding me that the revolving wheel of time had set free another link in what appeared the endless iron chain of a dreary existence.

I might in all probability have continued to lead this unsubstantial course of life to the present moment, so cruelly had my energies been crushed and my feelings lacerated, had I not felt at last the bite of something intolerable: it was poverty. If "the world" has any meaning and significancy in relation to the passionate and emotional part of man, it is a discipline, and the long arms of her Spartan austerity reached me at last. I was roused in a moment, but to something differing widely from the comparatively healthy energy that had

buoyed me up on former occasions. I was now merely stung—stung to desperation.

In a spasm of morbid activity I rushed over London, seeking, and indeed entreating, for literary employment. At last I procured it; but it was of a miserable description. I never sold my pen to vice; but I allowed it to toil for men who compelled me to rack my brains day and night for the mere means of existence. About this, after all, I cared nothing. I only ate to live, and if Nature became exhausted by superhuman toil, she could be forced to return to her work like a reluctant convict. I had some of Foggerton's prescriptions by me, quacking ones of course, and when my nerves felt shattered, they could be strung by some powerful stimulant. If I tossed restlessly on the bed at night, I flew to opium as my refuge, and forthwith it threw a calm, deep sleep, like the mantle of oblivion, over my prostrate limbs, or only woke the sleeper up to a world transcending this

flickering planet by its unearthly lustre. My good genius would meet me clad in a long amice of dazzling white, and throw open a gilded gate which ushered me to the halls and corridors of a gorgeous and boundless palace. Here I walked at my will between rank after rank of round and polished porphyry columns, reared upon white marble pedestals, or passed through the slumberous folds of solemn curtains suspended from burnished cornices, resting upon the capitals of two sister pillars of dim bronze. Along the aisles of clustered columns were ranged huge censers with perfumes reeking in them, ambergris, frankincense, spike-nard, cassia, and odorous woods of various kinds. In the dim recesses were beheld great candles, twinkling like so many stars in a frosty night. Beves and choruses of jubilant spirits, angelic creatures crowned with rays of light, met me as I paced onward—they carolled round me, scattering flowers on my head, or throwing their gar-

lands before my feet on the smooth marble pavement. It was a morbid trance after all, and the waking horrors of the reaction are too terrible to be described. I had turned my whole existence into two sets of dreams—waking and sleeping dreams. I weighed them together in the scale, and methought that these luxurious visions by night pressed down the balance, whilst the nausea by day kicked the beam, so that I was no small gainer.

There were times when my literary employment, miserable as it was, would fail me altogether; then hunger had to be resisted, and the dull, heavy knell of my own self-reproving thoughts tolling like a funeral-peal in my ears. On such occasions I could not sit alone, brooding over my misfortunes; nor could I wander through streets, for every passenger appeared to point his finger at me and tell the tale to his neighbour, that there passed Maurice Elvington, who had once been wealthy

and of good reputation, but now was a pauper in worldly estate, and a bankrupt as to his character. It was then I plunged into such dissipations as were within my reach—in company, of course, with the shiftless companions among whom my misery had cast a wretch's lot. All this can be told in a chapter; but it took months to break me down into what I became at the last. No man, however reckless, sits down to play with the adversary for very high stakes at first—it is only when he warms up with the game, feeling himself a desperate loser, that he pledges his very soul, and Satan then makes short work with his victim.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is scarcely necessary for me to mention, that during this downhill career, which was making a final ruin of my health and morals, I saw nothing whatever of my friends the Gentlys. It is not improbable that a renewal of my intimacy with this exemplary family might have averted my headlong course — at least saved me from the worst; but at the period of my first plunge into it, my heart was so stung that I formed a resolution to hide my anguish from the world, and lose sight of every friend I possessed on the face of the earth. With regard to Mr Gently, my con-

science has long since told me that I treated my good friend with ingratitude ; but my feelings were so morbidly distorted at the time, that I considered myself as only acting heroically, and with a certain kind of high-mindedness, in thus removing my presence from the face of every one I ever esteemed and respected.

Having, of course, quitted Bartlett's Buildings, I had no difficulty in obliterating every trace of my movements, and if Mr Gently had taken the trouble — and probably he did — to send two or three letters for me in succession to Lincoln's Inn, they remained there unopened, for I never dined in the hall again. Of course, my good friend must have been exceedingly puzzled at this strange conduct, and at last formed a very bad opinion, no doubt, of the person who could return his kindness with such ingratitude. And now when I myself look back, and view my conduct with a clearer and I trust

healthier tone of mind, it pains me exceedingly to reflect that I ever forfeited the good opinion of even the youngest member of this excellent family. But at the time I was perfectly reckless—indeed felt rather relieved than otherwise when I ascertained clearly that I could thus effectually lose sight of the best friends I ever possessed, and raise a barrier between us for ever.

But what with regard to the pretty Fanny? As I feel assured that the reader will ask me this question, I had better anticipate it by an answer. I never could and cannot to this day comprehend the real state of my feelings towards that pleasant little girl. I liked her society, felt myself drawn towards her, and often made her the companion of my lonely musings; but I think, after all, that there was too much reservation of self and condescension towards another in the feelings—whatever they might be—of which Fanny was the centre, to justify me in asserting that I ever exactly loved

her. Had matters turned out differently, I might in all probability have contemplated with complacency a union with the pretty creature, and when once married have become exceedingly attached to her. But at the period of which I am writing there was an obstacle to any idea of the kind in my own conscience. It told me the honest truth.

I had allowed myself to forget Fanny utterly, whilst cherishing ambitious aspirations to the hand of the Lady Venetia. Nay, that scornful woman had not only rejected the proffer of my own affections with contempt, but had embodied the repulse in words which most effectually restrained me from seeking consolation in any other family. She had advised me—they were her last words—"to marry in my own station of life." Hourly and daily did I chew the cud of bitter meditation over these words; and whenever the idea of Fanny played like a healing breath of

Heaven across my mind, I smiled contemptuously at my own weakness—confessing that if Maurice Elvington had led the daughter of plain middle-class Mr Gently to the altar, he would indeed have settled down “in his own station of life;” but not in that he occupied before that gentlemanly man, his uncle, mistook his nephew’s money for his own.

As for the Gentlys, I have little doubt they considered that their favourite child had a lucky escape from a future of misery, and this totally irrespective of my final ingratitude towards them. Miss Gently never liked the family favourite of the day, and the scheme to coax him to enter their circle had always encountered the opposition of that clear-sighted young lady, who saw a long way in most matters. The whole design was probably hatched in the fertile brain of good Mrs Gently, a lady apt to be swayed by her temporary likings, and no very wise person when taken out

of her proper sphere of domestic duty and activity. Mr Gently might make a decent resistance at first to this precious scheme of his better-half, but was sure, in the long-run, to fall into her way of thinking—that is, provided it did not involve the determination of a very difficult point of law. Yet, on a calm consideration, his good sense and knowledge of the world must have told him that he had been running the risk of confiding his amiable child to a person totally unfitted to guide her through life—indeed, totally unfitted to guide himself, since he no longer retained his original position in society. As for the pretty Fanny herself, and whether her affections—if they were ever bestowed upon another—were reclaimed, or rather taken back without a sigh, is a question with which I do not care to torment myself, much less trouble my reader—so I will without delay proceed with my narrative.

Time wore on apace with me, but was no

longer consumed in one long listless dream of lassitude and disgust. Every day—nay, night—now brought its heap of mere mental drudgery. There it was lying before me on the table, and I had to string my nerves in order to go through with it. I resorted, as others have done before me, to the most desperate expedients to enable myself for the time to encounter each detested task, and succeeded in my object; but then followed a speedy reaction, and what this cost me no words can recount. When the temporary excitement passed away, every fibre of my frame appeared unstrung; but yet throbbing and active—anxious to convey the intelligence of an inward sickness and irritation. I was compelled to keep the room in which I sat in a sort of twilight, by means of a thick curtain, for the pupils of my eyes were at times so morbidly distended that a beam of the sun falling on them caused them to quiver with the most exquisite anguish; but if I rushed out

into the clear open air, they appeared suddenly to shrink again, and a thick black veil to be scattered over the vault of the sky, falling before the prospect as I walked on. The noise and murmur of the streets also struck upon my ear with a leaden and muffled sound, and people as they passed by me appeared transmuted into spectres, so gliding and lifeless was their walk. I would sometimes, by a violent effort, rouse myself and wake up to a consciousness that a scene of real existence was, after all, passing before my gaze, but soon relapsed into this passive yet not painless waking trance.

Such was my life by day, and the night brought round no alleviation of these waking horrors. At one time I passed a whole week in my chair, without retiring to bed, so terrible was the torment which awaited me when I threw my jaded frame upon the mattress. I tossed restlessly from side to side, unable to sleep, whilst a throbbing

sensation beat across my temples, or a dull heavy pain pressed on the back of the head, coupled with a chill icy feeling in the feet and other extremities. Or did sleep visit my eyelids for a few merciful seconds, it came accompanied by some terrible dream, from which I would wake up with a start of horror; for something like a feeling of dissolution of the vital powers shot through my frame, drawing the blood away from the extremities, and causing it to creep towards the heart, which felt clogged and distended. When attacked by these symptoms, I was in the habit of starting up from the bed, whatever the hour of the night might be, and pacing up and down the room until dawn, much too terrified to retire to rest a second time.

It was now that the gorgeous, although unreal and sickly visions which had swept before my eyes under the excitement of opium, began to take their departure; and a strange sensation succeeded to

them : I can only describe it as a feeling compounded of the dreary horror and helpless despair which would come over a human being if he awoke suddenly from a profound sleep and found his frail essence suspended in infinite space. Sometimes methought that I was shooting with irresistible rapidity through the illimitable regions of the atmosphere, drawn towards one of the fixed stars, bound on a journey, lonely, hopeless, and interminable. At other times I imagined myself as standing isolated—the last of my kind—within a vast dreary temple, with a gigantic cupola frowning far above my head. Whilst I gazed upwards, this would begin to dilate, expanding until its huge dimensions were almost lost in the blank darkness ; and, at the same time, galleries and corridors would commence to branch out from the four sides of the temple, arcade opening into arcade, and that into a third, and so on, without any termination of the long-drawn perspective. The

most awful of the sensations I experienced at this period was one wherein I felt myself falling down, like Milton's Satan, through a void chaos—not for the two or three minutes during which the dream in all probability held me in its grasp, but for interminable ages. At last I woke up with a start, and recognised by the sickly daybreak the walls of my little chamber, which appeared to press down upon me and almost crush my frame between them, so vivid was the impression the horrible delusion from which I had just been released left behind it.

A more advanced stage of this mental and nervous excitement soon followed. Even my waking senses next began to carry false information to a diseased brain. They would, no doubt, have deluded me strangely, but I had been in my younger days a dabbler in pathology, and had read the details of several cases resembling my own. As it was, I took a kind of morbid pleasure in analyz-

ing the perceptive depravity, and tracing its progress; rejoicing all the while that I had found the clue to the temptations of a Saint Anthony, and the rhapsodies of a Theresa. Bells would ring in my ears, and glittering lights dance before my eyes, or hollow circles of pale blue fire open within their pupils. In the course of time these signals ushered in apparitions which I knew existed only in a morbid imagination, although I could not, for the life of me, sever them from reality as far as mere perception guided the search. For about six weeks two goblins entered the room at a regular hour towards the after-part of the day: I knew their appointed time, and waited for them, almost desiring their presence. When they had taken their station before me, they would perform elvish antics on the carpet until they appeared to become weary, and retire of their own accord. Towards the end of the six weeks they gradually grew fainter in outline, and at length disappeared alto-

gether. I had no reason to congratulate myself upon my release from this strange perceptive delusion, for a worse one supplied the place of it.

CHAPTER XX.

I HAVE arrived at a stage of my narrative where I feel compelled to solicit the indulgence—the toleration—of my reader. I have not to relate anything revolting or disgusting, far from it; but I can no longer assure myself of the certain truth of a portion of what is detailed in the next three or four chapters. My mind was sorely tried in those days—he has learned that unhappy fact already—and did not always continue a trusty dial whereon the shadows cast, by the light of things beyond, might truly traverse. It has long since regained a certain amount of health in its tone, and, lacer-

ated as it has been, more than once, has never since ceased to recognise reason as the mistress of its seat. Thank heaven ! whatever misery has since been my lot, I have had the sad consolation of meeting it boldly face to face, not struggled with it in the aimless agonies of frenzy. But at the time of which I am writing, my whole existence had become a waking nightmare, and I mingled reality and my own imaginations together strangely. Even while I hold the pen in my hand, a shudder passes through my frame—I seem to behold my old delusions in the background, like fiends hovering round the circle of a magician who has presumed to evoke them from the abyss. Should they break in and mar the truth with their mocking suggestions, the reader must thread the labyrinth of reality and mere fantasy for himself, since I have no more certain clue than my own untrustworthy recollections to place in his hand.

I have stated in the last chapter that the mere

derangement of my perceptions after a while departed, but that I had no reason to congratulate myself on the release. It left behind an irritability of the nervous system, and morbid savageness of temper, which baffle description. I became fierce without any exciting cause, or brooded over my misfortunes in a long fit of sullen misanthropy. A corrosive something—a hungering after revenge, as yet fixed on no defined person as its object, burnt in my breast. I was sensible at first that this strange feeling was only another phase of my old delusions, and retaining the power to struggle with it, could for a while dismiss it altogether from my thoughts: it might raven within me, but I could chain it up there like some savage animal, and restrain it from outward mischief. But it gnawed and gnawed within, preying on my vitals, and at times the sting would become so intolerable that I was compelled to start up from my chair and rush into the streets at all hours of the

night, as well as day. There I prowled stealthily about, first in this crowded thoroughfare, and then in some quiet court or square, frequently standing still in order to look curiously into the face of the persons who passed by me, under the delusion that in some one or other of them I should discover what I was seeking—some one who had done me an unpardonable injury, and therefore a fit object whereon to slake my thirst of vengeance.

If I am not misled by the delusion still—and the steps my mind is just now taking in the dark are very faltering—it was in one of these frantic walks that my diseased imagination at last fixed itself. I was hurrying along the Strand one morning, no doubt with a pace and gesture which revealed something of the malady of which I was the prey—as for the reckless habits which had brought it on, the disorder and poverty of my dress were a sufficient testimony to them—when I became conscious that the eyes of two persons

who passed by were fixed upon me. I heard two voices mention my name, one with pity and surprise, and the other in a different tone, and at once recognised the speakers: they were Gently and Mr Sadgrove, who were walking arm in arm. I hurried past them, but could not refrain from turning my head round, and then noticed that they were standing still, watching me at some distance. I rushed down one by-street and across another with reckless haste, for I felt afraid that they would give chase, and having overtaken me, interrogate me sternly as to the vicious course into which I had plunged. There was madness in the idea, but at the time I considered it a reasonable supposition. At last, I felt assured of having eluded their pursuit, but did not dare to return to my miserable lodgings until midnight; for I had a suspicion that as long as daylight lasted, they would stand ready to confront me at the very door of the house.

From this morning the whole state of the case appeared to me to be perfectly clear and convincing. I reasoned, no doubt from premises perfectly false and imaginary, but still with the logical accuracy with which a disordered intellect frequently mocks the healthy exercise of its functions. I was not deluded after all, I said to myself: I was really the object of persecution and calumny, and Mr Sadgrove was the author of it. Nay, he was watching me—I had met him once or twice in the streets again, and he had followed my footsteps and had traced out the miserable den in which I lurked. He had my landlady in pay, and received from her a daily record of my vices and irregularities, and published them to every one—to Mr Gently—to Malland—every one who had ever esteemed me—to the whole world, in fact. Yet I could not escape from his scrutiny by leaving my lodging and taking another. Something forbade it—told me that I

must not, dare not, do it. If I intended to speak to the landlady on the subject, I found myself involuntarily starting some other topic of discourse. I was hunted and at bay, with one last melancholy resource left—I could turn round on my pursuer.

I do not know whether I am detailing a certain fact, or the mere conjuration of my own brain, but I have a distinct recollection that one morning Mr Sadgrove entered my room whilst I was indulging in a dismal fit of self-crimination. Without asking my leave, he took a chair, and began a conversation, or rather lecture, of which the alteration in my habits was the theme. I shook my head at him sullenly; but he went on, indulging in that strain of exulting self-complacency which sometimes assumes the garb of sympathy. As I gave him few or short answers, he at last rose from his seat and quitted the room in a quiet passion, denouncing on my head every punishment, both in this world and the next, if I did not amend my

evil courses—at the command, of course, of the denouncer. When he left the room, I locked the door for fear he should return. Whether this really occurred or not I cannot say.

From that day, however, my mind was made up—I would clear myself from his calumnies at any cost. I haunted Mr Gently's place of business in Bedford Row for three whole weeks—even went at times into the office, and inquired for him. It was the vacation, and only two clerks were there. Whether they had received their orders or not I cannot tell, for they always denied their master to me. Still I hung about the premises, for I was determined that I would meet my old friend if I could, and compel him to acknowledge that some one was calumniating me to him.

One afternoon I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to seek out Mr Gently in the bosom of his family, and I recollect distinctly rushing along the roads in a coach I had hired, but with no

clear idea in what direction I gave orders for the driver to turn his horse's head. At last I woke up from a kind of reverie on hearing a bell ring, and recognised the little villa in which I had spent so many happy days. I believe that I ordered the driver to wait for me, and walked, as I thought, with perfect self-collection into the entrance-hall, and from it to the library. By some morbid freak of a diseased imagination, I have to this hour a perfect picture on my mind of all that passed; but it appears dwarfed and thrown into distant perspective, just as if I were looking through the wrong end of an opera-glass at some scene acted on the stage.

Mr Gently was seated in the library with Mr Sadgrove, and they were going carefully through some papers together. Neither his wife nor any of his three daughters were present: they were probably away from home—at some watering-place or other, for it was at the end of September,

or commencement of October. When I entered the room, which I did with great deliberation, they were both startled, and Mr Gently cast an uneasy glance at Mr Sadgrove, who answered it by a look of great significance. This stung me to the quick, for my suspicions had long been fastened upon Mr Sadgrove. I had now met the calumniator, methought, face to face, and would expose him to the man in whose opinion, of all others, he was desirous of standing well. Yes, I might expose myself at the same time, but I would at least ruin his credit, at all risks and hazards.

Having then by a violent effort mustered what I imagined was a great amount of self-possession, I addressed myself to Mr Gently, and at first talked coherently, although my eye no doubt told the story of a disordered brain. As I warmed up with the struggle of my own feelings, my mind appeared to elude my grasp, and a fit of violence

gave premonitory signs of coming on. I was sane enough to be conscious that Mr Gently's manner towards me was cold; this caused me to feel irritated, and raise my voice when I addressed him. I did so at great length, levelling accusations, no doubt wide of the mark, against some one, probably Sadgrove. Mr Gently appeared very much pained, and turned his head away, whilst he whispered something to his friend.

Upon this Sadgrove turned round to me, and addressed me with an air of reproof, observing, "that he saw how matters stood, and that he was very sorry for it." Mad as I was, I could understand that he accused me of being in a state of intoxication, and stung to the quick, I darted out of my chair; the little man, however, who was no coward, placed his hand upon my shoulder, and told me that I must not get excited. This was an indignity not to be borne, and I sprang towards him, but found that my antagonist was a stronger

person than the slimness of his frame promised, for he kept me at arm's length, although his face turned deadly pale, and every muscle was strained. Feeling myself coerced, I grew desperate, and made an impulsive clutch at one of my pockets. Mr Sadgrove recoiled, and a dreadful thought passed over me. I had carried a brace of pistols on my person for the last two months, and could only have left them behind me by accident, for I recollected distinctly that I tried the locks a few minutes before I quitted home. Had I nearly become a homicide? The horror of the thought unstrung me, and I sank into their arms as powerless as an infant.

I found myself next in a coach—I suppose the one which had been waiting for me. I heard the door shut to, and some one mount the box by the side of the driver. By and by I was standing at my own door, and Mr Sadgrove, who said something to my landlady as she opened it, stood for a

few minutes at my side. I recollect something like a struggle ; after which I found myself on my bed, where I lay for some time without motion or distinct consciousness. I tried to weep, but my brain was on fire, and not one tear would come. Gradually, as the light faded, a spectre rose at the feet of the bed, and stood there without motion. I bade it avaunt, but it stood there still. I regained the use of my limbs by a violent effort—rushed, towards the phantom ; it receded in the direction of the window, through which it glided. I threw up the sash, and looked down into the street—the stars were sparkling with an unearthly lustre, and the midnight air played with balmy freshness across my temples. I felt an incontrollable desire to leap down, and placed my foot on the window-sill, but recoiled at the last moment, and rushed back into the room, where I threw myself again upon the bed.

CHAPTER XXI.

I HAD been conscious for many weeks of maintaining a desperate struggle between my sanity and the delusions that strove to master it. I had hitherto called to the rescue all the powers which aid a sound mind, and by their help kept the ruthless besiegers of the seat of intellect at bay ; but I now seemed to throw up the struggle and succumb to the enemy in a fit of despair. There did I lie upon my bed, hopeless and resistless, the victim of a dull leaden pain pressing like an incubus on my temples (so intense was this waking misery) scarcely conscious of any outward object,

save that hour after hour recorded its sullen flight by the deep solemn tongue of the church clock, which boomed through the stillness as if tolling one to his last sleep in the charnel.

Shortly after midnight this stupor passed off, and a fit of morbid excitement took the place of it. The pupils of my eyes dilated, and forms, which at first lacked distinct and tangible substance, flittered across them in the dark. In a short time I became conscious of something resembling a long procession, which came into the room on the right-hand side of the bed, swept in shadowy pomp round its feet, passed along to the left hand, and then disappeared in the obscurity. Hour after hour did these shadows pace before my view, and, although in great pain all the time, I became so fascinated as to be unable to take my eyes off them. The apparitions at first assumed hideous and spectral forms, searing my eyeballs like the procession of Banquo and his lineage be-

fore Macbeth in the witches' cavern. There were ancient kings in the train, and warlike generals of old-world renown, but their eyes glared full of un-earthly fire, and the limbs of some were hacked and covered with blood. I recognised them by their diadems or fillets of laurel—the kings of Nineveh were amongst them in their fringed robes and jewelled bracelets—Alexander the Great and the shade of Belisarius.

After a while followed a train of martyrs, their arms bound tightly with cords, and their faces of an ashy paleness. Executioners and lictors were intermingled with the group; aged bishops and then priests, who served the temples in the forum. There were several whose features methought I recognised, and I felt fain to accost them and endeavour to arrest their attention, but they either glared at me reproachfully, or averted their faces. My poor mother passed by, with her meek eyes upturned to heaven, and her rich brown hair hang-

ing dishevelled over her shoulders. As a stately figure walked feebly before me, I said to myself that I knew him well—he was Lord Budesdale, and my uncle, Sir William Maurice, followed him. Fanny came also in the concourse, but she pressed the palms of her hands, which were unbound, over her eyeballs, so as not to look at me. Many other persons, some of whom had died before my birth, or in my infancy, and whose features I recognised by description merely, followed her—all now restored to life, although not animation, and walking like bloodless phantoms before me.

As my curiosity grew unnaturally excited, the pain over my temples appeared to become lulled, and apparitions of a more cheerful kind presented themselves to my vision. I beheld something resembling one of the gorgeous processions described in *Aladdin*—eunuchs in magnificent dresses of crimson satin, stiff with gold brocade, who carried on their heads silver trays, embossed with emeralds

and carbuncles which glittered through the dusk, and heaped up with pomegranates, citrons, roses, tulips, and other fruits and flowers of delicious hues and fragrance. Others, stooping under the weight, upheld golden vases and flagons, in which sparkled wines and sherbets, ruby-coloured or amber. Behind their servants followed a bevy of dark-eyed Odalisques clad in snowy white turbans, and tunics of green or purple tied loosely round the waist by gay silken girdles, and with the long sweeping trains of their velvet caftans borne along by sable Nubians. Immediately after them, evoked by some strange freak of my schoolboy reading reacting upon a heated imagination, trooped joycundly along a stately Roman Triumph, as drawn on the cartoon by Andrea Mantegna, and described in Plutarch's Life of Paulus Emilius. Legionaries filed before me with their lances fixed in rank, or elevating golden eagles, from which fluttered the thin silken standards of the republic. Others

reared trophies made up of breastplates or burnished coats of mail transfixed by a spear, with warlike weapons—swords, pikes, battle-axes, arrows, and oval shields—bound across their breasts. One whole detachment was unarmed, and carried in a double rank gigantic flagons or shallow dishes heaped up to the brim with gold and silver coin, jewelled bracelets, embroidered belts and girdles, all placed loosely in the vessels, and rattling as their bearers marched along. Virgins, resembling in shape the ancient winged Victories, floated above their heads, each goddess carrying a triumphal garland in either extended hand; and boys wafting thuribles, from which climbed the smoke in thin wreaths, closed the first part of the procession. Lastly came, in his chariot, the general—a stern time-worn man, with his harsh features crowned by a wreath of laurel—and around his car were crowded the grim veterans in whose company he had won the victory, all rugged men of severe

countenance, such as we see them delineated on the column of Trajan. All these spectres wore a look of haughty exultation unmixed with pity, and some of them had assumed the features of my enemies. I recognised the Lady Venetia in the midst of a long file of priestesses, as cold and disdainful as ever, although very beautiful, even in the scornful smile with which she swept before me.

Long, very long, did I lie supine on my couch, the prey of these singular illusions, haunted and yet fascinated. As the morning just broke, and the sickly light crept slowly into the chamber, my head began to swim round with the intolerable excitement, and everything whirled and danced with me—the room—the procession—whilst I appeared to be receding and leaving them behind me. I had now quite lost all sense of pain, and imagined that I was breathing a warm and genial atmosphere. Up to this time I had been deprived of all power of volun-

tary motion, but now a coursing fire danced along the channel of every vein, and I felt the strength of their most agile years restored to my limbs. After a while methought that the whirlpool settled down to rest, and I found myself basking in a tropical island, engirdled by the deep blue waters which slept in the hot yellow haze of the sunshine, and just threw a snowy ripple here and there across a bar of white or crimson coral. The blue peaks of a chain of conical hills rose fairily in its centre, and rivulets of pure water trickled down the sides of umber crags, and played amidst the green savannas at their feet. In one corner of the island was spread out a kind of lagoon or inlet of the sea, and over its bosom hung, in a dense and tangled forest, ribbed palm-trees, nopals, bananas, with a feathery cocoa soaring up from the thicket and sleeping in the blaze of noon. But brilliant as this vision might be, it did not possess the sharp tone and outline of positive reality—the trees had not the solid-

ity and massive foliage of those we meet with in nature, and the whole bore some resemblance to a lovely scene set on the stage and viewed by gas-light. Something within me continued whispering that it was all an illusion, and that I could dismiss it from my presence if I could only regain the power of pursuing a collected train of thought for a few minutes. I now and then made an effort to do so, and immediately the whole picture waved as if painted on a curtain; but the mere essay cost me so much, that I immediately relaxed my temporary hold over my brain, and allowed it to ramble more madly than ever.

It was now also that I was exposed to the mockery of another strange deception, interwoven of truth shaded off into the vagaries of a feverish delirium. Amongst other evil influences for months gathering around me, had been the trashy books I found lying about all parts of the house in which I lodged—the slatternly landlady being a hopeless

novel-reader. These I was in the habit of taking up as they fell in my way, endeavouring to beguile the anguish of my own thoughts with any fictitious repast, however jejune and miserable. I dipt into one the very day before I was seized with this fever, and devoured the whole volume as I held it in my hand. It was *Melmoth the Wanderer*, written by the unfortunate author of *Bertram*. The work is a delectable compound of diablerie and absurdity, but scattered here and there one finds a few pages of fine imagination.

One of these passages, and it would do honour to any writer, is the description of a beautiful island, and of a virgin Imalee who grows up alone in it—in fact, a kind of female *Robinson Crusoe*. This description was recoined in my heated brain whilst at the height of the fever. Methought that I was lying idly on the bank of the lagoon, parched with a burning thirst, but unable to stoop my head and drink of its silver waters, when sud-

denly a virgin like this Imalee put aside the rustling branches of the forest, and bent over me with eyes full of pity and compassion. Her features, however, were not those of a stranger, for I had dwelt upon the same mild placid face several times before, and that too within the last few months. The thought instantly darted across me—here was a friend at last who might rescue its victim from this bitter mockery of reality, if he could only summon the power of enabling her to understand that his reason had become unseated against his own will. I spoke to her—once and then again—striving to express myself coherently, but found that the words which flowed from my lips were wild and raving, frame them as I would—so I yielded to the delirium in utter despair, for I thought that I should never be sane again, and that it was not worth my while to make any further effort to become so.

Nevertheless I had sufficient consciousness of

outward things left to feel a misty and listless assurance that I was not abandoned in my extremity. Imalee, or my kind nurse, for each seemed the other, seldom quitted my side by night or day. Sometimes she would be seated on the luxuriant grass, watching with me the ripple on the seasand, or the distant wave careering amidst the coral-breakers in the offing, and curling in a thread of white foam over their broken ridges. At another time she was at the bedside, tending me in a long and dangerous illness, administering medicines, or holding me back firmly but gently with her hand, when I insisted upon rising from the bed and pacing about the room. Day and night also travelled round in their appointed circuit, and I often heard a clock strike distinctly, whilst a murmur, like the surge of human life heard in a distant street, was just wafted across my ear—and then I was in the island again.

One morning—I do not know how long after

the commencement of the fever—I awoke as from a heavy sleep, or rather trance. The tumult of my spirits had subsided, the frenzy ceased to revel in my brain. A disc resembling the face of the moon climbed from the bosom of the sea and gradually enlarged, whilst the scenery of the island parted like a cloud and drifted away. I was conscious of being in my own bedroom, stretched upon my couch, in the extremity of a long illness. I recognised those about me, and attempted to speak to them, but my tongue was unhinged, and could only utter a few feeble syllables. I saw the quiet face of the same kind nurse who had attended me throughout my illness, and was aware that she was in earnest conversation with another person. When the medical man—for such he probably was—quitted the room, she returned softly to my bedside, calling the attention of another female in the room to some change in my appearance or the symptoms of the

fever; and the latter, who was my landlady, went quietly out at the door.

After an interval of about half-an-hour the woman returned, and brought back with her a gentleman—but not the one who had just left us—and the moment he came to the bed, I knew the stranger at once, and recognised his features. He was a pale young curate, who officiated at the parish-church, and fulfilled his holy mission with the fervour of an apostle. I had often met him in the neighbourhood, and looked after him with envy and admiration as he went hurrying down the most noisome streets, bound on his errands of charity and mercy. I was not unwilling to see him again, but yet felt puzzled to understand why they had brought him into the room, and in the weakness of my brain failed to make the riddle out. It was only when he came to the bedside, and spoke to me gently but impressively—hinting at death, and the need of a preparation for

the awful change—that I could comprehend the cause of his visit, and then I only mastered it in a listless kind of manner. I refused to answer him, or even look him in the face, and turned my head sullenly to the wall; and yet I felt that to live or die was all one to me. After hanging over me for a few minutes, the clergyman shook his head sorrowfully, observing that I was evidently past the stage in which his visit could be of any avail. He then left the room, and I became almost immediately afterwards totally insensible.

Whether I continued in this state days or weeks I have not the slightest recollection. I have never made any inquiries concerning this illness, or allowed it to be alluded to. When I began to regain anything like consciousness, it at first told me that a periodical change took place from light to darkness, and that it perturbed me strangely. After this I became aware of a feeling of great

nervous terror during the night, mercifully relieved however by fits of profound sleep. By degrees this irritability wore away, and I could restrain what remained of it. After a while, followed the healthy perception of a less limited range of objects. I recognised the room in which I was a prisoner, and watched my nurse as she entered or quitted it.

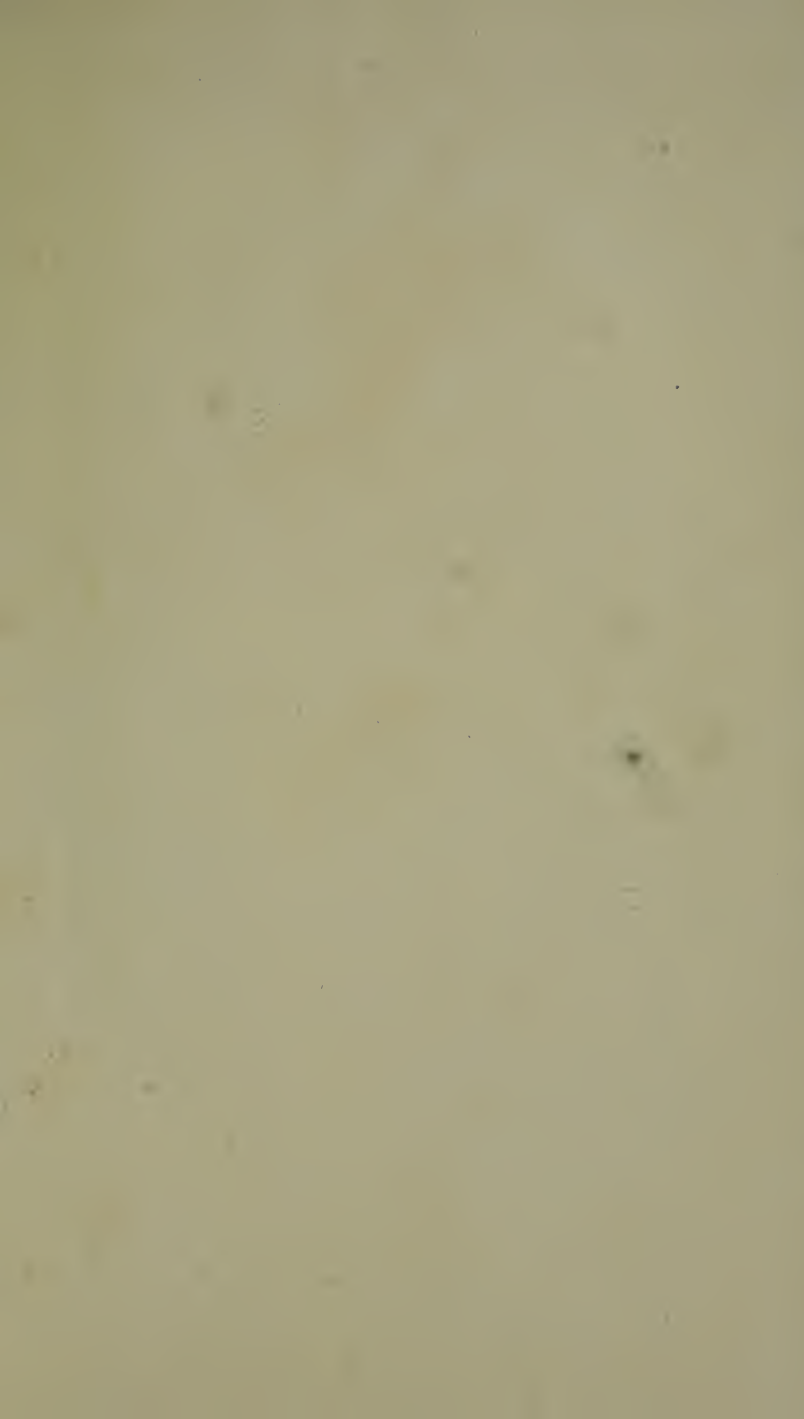
At last I became completely restored to a sense of existence; but what a feeble and altered being did I find myself. I was in the extremity of the debility following a long and dangerous fever, and could not move hand or foot in bed. When I looked at my fingers they appeared wasted to a shadow, and my tongue could not utter a sentence without pausing and frequently faltering. My mind was as enfeebled as my body—the tumult and tension of the faculties had passed away, and I found myself in the childishness of a second infancy—a mere shadow of my

former self, just like that one casts on a sunny wall as he walks along it. But weak as my intellect had been rendered, it was now restored to its right tone, and I was enabled to recognise the kind and gentle Samaritan who had rescued me from the grave. My heart came bounding to my lips. I strove to make my thanks audible—the feebleness of a severe illness overpowered my utterance. I burst into a flood of tears, and shed them on the neck of the being who had so long watched over me, and whose graceful form had seemed to me the embodiment of the virgin Imalee of “Melmoth the Wanderer.”

END OF VOL. II.







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